

The Foreigner  
in the Farmyard

E. Williams

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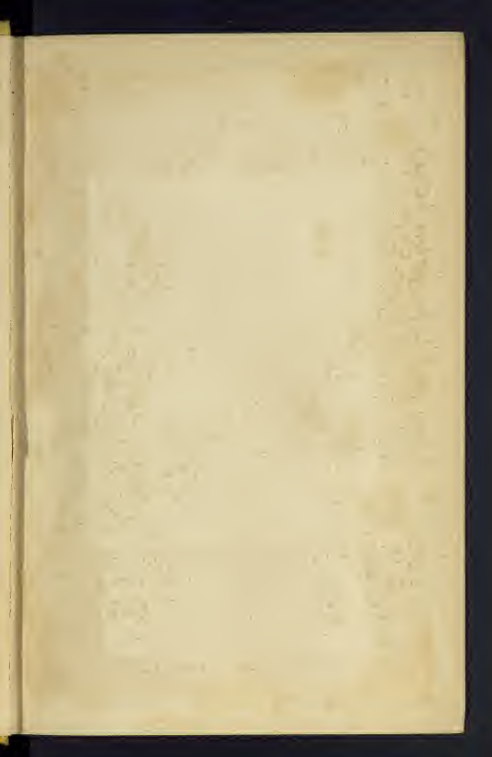
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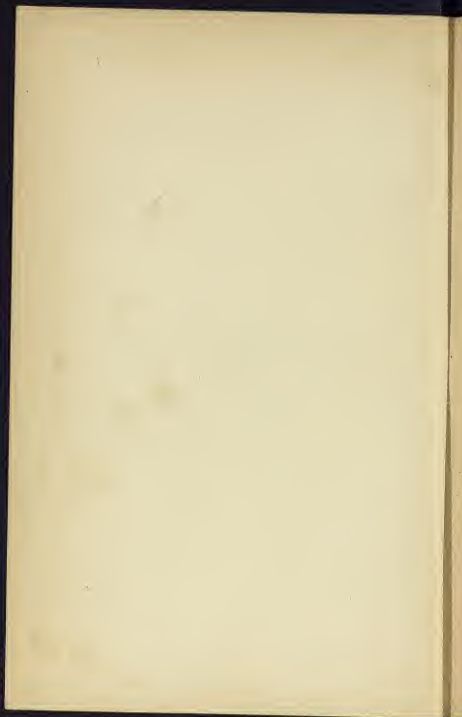
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THE FOREIGNER  
IN THE FARMYARD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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# THE FOREIGNER IN THE FARMYARD

BY

ERNEST EDWIN WILLIAMS

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY

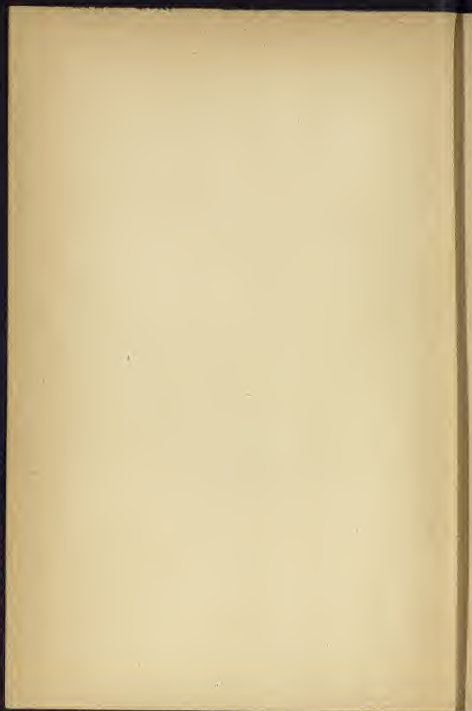
AUTHOR OF 'MADE IN GERMANY,' ETC.



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To

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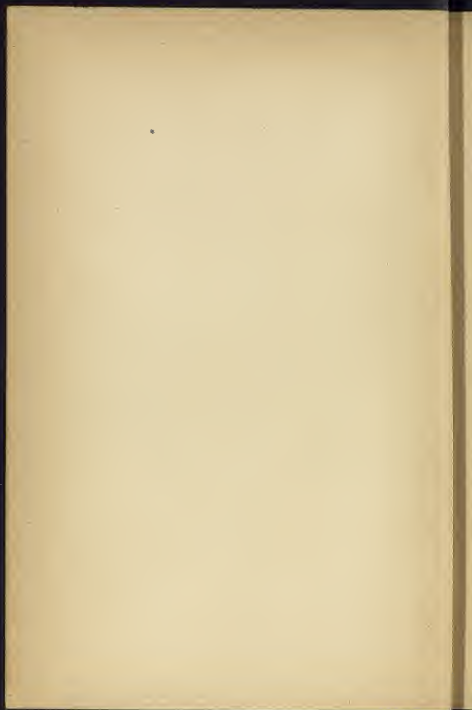
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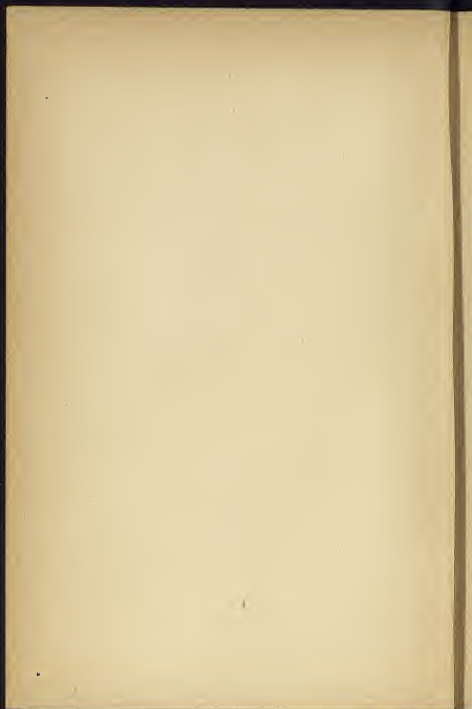
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THIS BOOK

IS RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED.



*'The evidence which has been brought before us has convinced us of the extreme gravity of the agricultural situation.'*—ROYAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE, SECOND REPORT.



## PREFACE.

THE first four chapters of this book and part of the fifth have already appeared, substantially in their present form, in the *New Review*. The chapter on 'The Possibilities of Beetroot' is adapted from an article in the *Saturday Review*. The sections on 'Light Railways,' 'Agricultural Banks,' and 'Burdens on the Land' are new.

I do not think an apology for re-publication is necessary, if I may argue from the reception accorded the re-issue of the articles entitled 'Made in Germany.' I do not know whether a similar fate awaits the present volume. As a fact the execrations heaped upon 'Made in Germany' should be redoubled in respect to 'The Foreigner in the Farmyard'; for the attack on 'Made in Germany' was solely owing to one or two more or less casual references to Protection. In the ensuing pages Protection stalks prominently,\* naked and unashamed.

I have never yet come across a man genuinely earnest for the prosperity of British Agriculture who was not either aggressively or passively Protectionist. Agriculture, above all other industries, cries aloud for Protection, and will not be prosperous until it gets it. Yet I am not of those who proclaim Protection, and Pro-

tection all the time, when the renovation of Agriculture is the topic of discussion. The aid of the State must be supplemented by the self-help of the individual, and the chief direction which such self-help must take is the larger self-help called Co-operation. Unless cultivators combine for production and distribution their industry is irretrievably doomed. The need for these two reforms is the chief burden of the ensuing pages.

E. E. W.

SUDEBURY, HARROW,  
*June, 1897.*

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# THE FOREIGNER IN THE FARMYARD.

## I.

### *THE GRANARY.*

#### PRELIMINARY.

WE have heard much of England's Isolation. Diplomatically the phrase may be correct; but turn from Diplomacy to Economics, and it becomes ironical, for we are humbly dependent on other countries for much of our daily bread. We import more Corn than all the other nations of Europe together: our markets being the world's dumping-ground for Breadstuffs. And we go to the Foreigner for the Butter to spread on that Bread, for our Eggs and for our Cheese, for our Meat and Fruit and Sugar, our Vegetables, our Milk, our Lard. The word Isolation applied to England sounds ugly, when it doesn't sound foolish.

This need not alarm you, says the Orthodox Economist. In Mr. Barlow's best manner he takes you by the hand, and points out the processes of exchange in all their beautifully varied manifestations: 'Here, Tommy, you see a Russian farmer; he has an abundance of wheat, but he needs a shirt; we supply him with the shirt, and take some wheat in exchange. There is an American ranchman: he is surrounded with meat,

but wants a knife to eat it with; we supply him with the knife, and take his superfluous meat. There, again, is a poor negro, under a cocoanut palm, pining for a hymn-book to rejoice his Sabbath hours: we print and send him one, and he sends back to us those cocoanuts which you, Tommy, love so well.' The arrangement is so full of mutual advantages, so simple, so perfect, that one's suspicions are aroused. And those suspicions are justified: the system is not flawless. The Russian farmer has now taken to getting his calico from Russian or German or Austrian mills; the American ranchman finds a good enough imitation of the Sheffield article in his own Eastern manufacturing towns, or perchance at Solingen; and the poor negro, though he has not yet built unto himself a printing-press, thinks the German hymnal as highly coloured as the English: so that it gets ever harder to find a foreign market for our wares. That is flaw Number One. Flaw Number Two resides in the fact that there are things which it is not good to part with to the Foreigner in unlimited quantities: things which cannot be replaced. Some goods can be replaced quite easily. Foodstuffs can: the grains and the dairy produce sent us from abroad do not drain the resources of the countries whence they come. So with manufactures: we can go on turning out ships and penknives and pocket-handkerchiefs for all time, and our country will not be a penny the poorer. But the draught upon our precious store of ores and coal is quite another story. They belong to the category of things which cannot be replaced, and we should regard with jealousy their unlimited export to other countries, where they are largely used for the manufacture of goods to compete with our own. Yet this unlimited export is just what we are indulging in, and to an ever increasing extent; it is with these precious, irreplaceable posses-

sions that we are paying our butcher's and our baker's bills to foreign countries. To that extent we are living on our capital.

Thus, the system of exchange as at present practised appears on examination to be less worthy of unstinted admiration than our Orthodox Economist (good optimistic creature!) would have us believe; thus, too, we are compelled to think that it is a good thing for our country to feed herself as far as she possibly can. There are other reasons for so thinking. A countryside alive with thriving villages is more conducive to the general welfare than a countryside depleted for the ampler crowding of city slums and the urban labour market. In the minds of many, also, the reflection that we are able to feed ourselves would be a comfort in the event of war. Nor does it follow that our manufacturing industries would languish with the prosperity of agriculture. On the contrary, many would directly benefit thereby. The manufacture of agricultural implements and machinery is but one of many instances. And indirectly, there is the enlarged purchasing power of the rural population, when that population has money to spend. I trust, therefore, that I do not exasperate the majority of my readers by laying down the initial proposition: That the prosperity of the Farmyard is a desirable economic condition. Personally, I am prepared to go farther, and to quote the words of Edmund Burke: 'In every country the first creditor is the plough. This original indefeasible claim supersedes every other demand.'

#### WHEAT.

This cereal naturally has precedence. Before going into Production let us consider the Decline in Price: first, because that aspect of the Breadstuff Question fills

the vision of many to the exclusion of all others; and secondly, because the Decline in Price is largely responsible for the Decline in Production, and so forms a fitting preface thereto.

*The Decline in Price.*

Our acquaintance with official prices goes back to 1646, when the average price of Wheat at Eton was 44s. per quarter. The earliest year for which an official average price was quoted for the whole of England and Wales is 1771; the figure is 48s. 7d. (The import Duty then was 17s. 6½d., but the Import itself was very small.) The top price during the present century was in 1812, when the average quotation was 126s. 6d. per quarter. This tremendous charge figures conspicuously in the arguments of Cobdenite politicians—(the Cobden Club says that Free Trade accounts for the difference between prices then and prices now)—but in the interests of accurate statement it is well to point out that the Import Duty in that year was *eightpence farthing per boll*: a circumstance which heavily discounts the inference sought to be drawn. It is also worthy of remembrance that the closing years of the last century and the early years of this one, particularly the Bogey Year, 1812, comprehended a period of depreciated currency and paper money; so that 126s. 6d. in the Returns is many points per cent. above the real value, according to modern (or earlier) standards. There are other reasons for believing the nominal prices credited to the early years of the century to be fictitiously high, and because of this inaccuracy the Board of Agriculture officials have put the years before 1821 in a separate table in the Returns. In 1815 there was a change in the law. The importation of Foreign Wheat was forbidden when the price was under 82s. 6d. a quarter; of Colonial, when

the price was under 69s. 1½d. Come we now to that epoch-making '45. The average price was 50s. 10d.; the gates were thrown open; the average price rose to 54s. 8d. in '46, and to 69s. 9d. in '47. Then came a fall; but in '54-56 the Crimean War produced a rise, the price in '55 reaching 74s. 8d. It was then that Englishmen got their first practical demonstration of the dangerous position into which they were being forced by the policy of encouraging Foreign Wheat and discouraging Home Production. The increase in the Foreign Import caused by the repeal of the duty had been balanced by a corresponding decrease in Home Production, and the restriction in the Foreign Supply induced by the war sent up the price. For Wheat could not be reaped at a moment's notice from lands which had been forced out of cultivation. Had they remained in crop, the war would not have produced that alarming rise.

Little more need be recorded in the history of prices. With fluctuations of no very great extent, they have practically held a downward way since the close of the Crimean War, and they reached the lowest recorded in '94, when the average was 22s. 10d. per quarter.\* It stiffened by a few pence in '95, and the failure of the Indian and the apparent reduction of the Russian, Australian, and Argentine crops, sent it up with some rapidity during the closing months of '96: which also is an object-lesson in the perils of Outside Production. It is well enough to hedge against a failure at home by keeping an access to other markets, but that advantage is inevitably attended with this disadvantage:

\* It should be remembered that, low as the prices quoted in the Corn Returns are, the actual price received by the farmer is often lower still. The official prices are obtained from the merchants, and they commonly include freight charges and middlemen's profits.

that crop failures and wars in nearly all the other wheat-producing countries of the world affect the price of Wheat to us. And we have not been content to keep an access to the surplus supplies of other countries; we have ceased to care for a home supply.

The captious critic will perhaps contend, that expenses have diminished, as well as prices. True; but in nothing like the same ratio. According to Mr. Turnbull's calculations for Norfolk, there was a net reduction in expenses between '74 and '94 of £1 6s. 3d. per acre (of all kinds of crops and fallow). But the money yield per acre of Wheat was reduced by £7. The Farmer, therefore, made between £5 and £6 less profit on each acre of Wheat.

#### *The Decline in Production.*

The Wheat Production of the United Kingdom in the early years of the century is not accurately known, but the Import Statistics prove that our grandfathers were practically independent of Foreign Flour. In '08, '15, and '22, the Import of Wheat, Wheat Meal, and Flour is marked *nil*, and only *two quarters* are credited to '22. In '30 it rose to 1,701,885 quarters.\* Then it fell by big bounds to 24,826 quarters in '36; to rise again to 2,977,302 quarters in '42. These figures demonstrate that up to the Forties England produced by far the greater part of her breadstuff. In Porter's 'Progress of the Nation,' an estimate is made of Home and Foreign Productions respectively for the decade of '31-40, whence it appears that of the mean population in England and Scotland of 17,500,000, 16,500,000 were fed on home-grown Wheat, Ireland being altogether self-supporting. Sir Robert Peel estimated (in '42) that the Home Produc-

\* These weights are given in weight of grain, 1 cwt. of Wheat Flour being reckoned the equivalent of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cwt. of Wheat in Grain.

tion reached 22,000,000 quarters a year; Cobden (in '48) put the figure at 20,000,000. It was alleged that though the country produced nearly all it consumed, yet it did not consume enough: that (as Cobden said in the House of Commons) there were 'seven million to eight million people without Wheaten Bread.' This statement was used as a chief reason for facilitating the entry of Foreign Corn. But it appears to have been highly rhetorical (let us say); for 21,000,000 quarters, the lowest figure to which Cobden could reduce his estimate of the national consumption, works out to over 378 lbs. per head of the population. Now, the average consumption per head between '90 and '98 was 370 lbs.; so that if Cobden told the truth (which is hard to believe), there must be some ten or twelve million people in this country to-day who are strangers to the taste of Wheaten Bread—which also is hard to believe. We may, therefore, take it that in the Forties, the country had, in proportion to the population, as ample a supply of Home-Grown Bread as it has to-day of Home and Foreign-Grown combined.

This view is borne out by the subsequent history of English Wheat. The ever-increasing Import, which set in after '45, is tallied by a decrease in the Home Production: a decrease not only relative, having regard to the increasing population, but actual. The 22,000,000 quarters of the early Forties got down in a dozen years to less than 16,000,000, the average production for '56-57 being 15,756,881 quarters. The Import increased to correspond, but certainly not more. It amounted to 5,276,032 quarters in '56, and to 4,111,450 in '57; and as, in the meantime, the population had increased, it is evident that those 8,000,000 persons were still apparently going unfed, notwithstanding the repeal of the duty on Foreign Corn. The only difference was, that a number

of English mouths were being fed with loaves made from Foreign, instead of, as before, from English Wheat. The acreage under Wheat in the United Kingdom in this period ('56-57) amounted to 4,199,812 acres (Lawes and Gilbert). The average for '61-65 was 3,750,587 acres (Lawes and Gilbert's estimate). For '71-75 it had sunk to 3,737,140 acres. For '81-85 it was 2,829,584 acres. In '88 it was 2,668,226 acres; and from that year on to '95 the shrinkage was steady and (practically) continuous. In '94, when Wheat stood at 1,980,228 acres, many people fondly hoped that the nadir had been reached. They were disappointed: the '95 returns gave 1,456,042 acres, a decrease on the thitherto lowest (that of '93) of 499,171 acres. True, there was a seasonal reason for this exceptionally big drop: the '94 autumn was not favourable to Wheat-sowing, and many farmers in consequence sowed Barley in its stead. True, also, there has been an improvement in '96, the number of acres under wheat for this year standing at 1,734,118—an increase of 278,076 acres over '95. There is a little consolation in this, but as the '96 acreage was 246,110 acres below that of '94, there is no cause for rejoicing overmuch.

*What It Means.*

'Permanent pasture shows another gain, this time of 140,000 acres, which means loss of employment for about 3,000 labourers.' Thus the *Journal of Horticulture*\* sums up its comments on the Agricultural Returns for 1895. To be quite accurate, the gain was 145,000 acres, as Major Craigie shows in his Report. Three thousand labourers deprived of work in one year is surely a fact of sufficient seriousness to arrest the attention of the most flippant optimist that ever boasted, in the Press or on

\* November 5, 1896.



the platform, of England's mounting prosperity. It would be interesting to follow the fortunes of that three thousand! The older men among them are probably by this time enjoying the hospitality of the workhouse; some of the younger have, no doubt, indirectly contributed to the pauper population by elbowing their seniors out of other rural industries; the rest have probably made the melancholy pilgrimage citywards, to cast themselves upon labour markets already overstocked. But the story has its chief point in the fact that the three thousand are but the latest detachment in an army; for Foreign Wheat maintains the output of Unemployed from year to year with unflagging regularity. Do you ask for specific instances? Turn to the evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture. Here is a sample. It is from the evidence of Mr. W. L. Huskinson, a land agent and farmer in Nottinghamshire\* :—'The 400 acres that we gave up in '78 and '79 we had previously farmed for 30 years; the condition of that is that one-half of that which was plough is now grass, and there are now only one man and a lad, and we had formerly six or eight labourers during the winter.'

The Cheap Loaf is well enough, but some of its cheapness has to be paid for dearly. To an agricultural labourer cut off from a living by the abandonment of the fields where he has hitherto worked, it is poor consolation to know that his bread is a halfpenny a loaf less than it was, by reason of the foreign competition which has forced those fields out of tillage. To the artisan and the factory hand, whose employment is made more precarious and is worse paid because out-of-work villagers are flocking to the towns, the advantages of cheapened bread are seriously discounted. To the middle-class man

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence (C. 7,400-1), Q. 965.

a halfpenny a loaf\* does not (unless his household be a big one) mean the difference of a sovereign either way on the year's bread bill; but the prosperity of the country's chief industry, and indirectly of its other industries, means a considerably greater difference than *that*.

It is very necessary to call your attention to the exact difference a rise in the price of Wheat makes in the baker's bill, because it is a subject on which strangely exaggerated impressions are fostered. These impressions are vague as well: a quality usually shared by the statements which produce them. Sometimes it happens that these statements are specific: then they are also wondrous. The most remarkable with which I am acquainted dates from '85, when Mr. J. S. Jeans published his 'England's Supremacy.' On page 98 of this book you are told that 'England now imports over 600,000,000 quarters of corn per annum. Impose a tax of 5s. per quarter upon this quantity, and the product would be over £175,000,000 sterling per annum. . . . The imposition of such a tax would be equivalent to a charge of nearly £5 per head upon every man, woman, and child in the three kingdoms.' Our Corn Import is pretty heavy, it is true, but it doesn't quite reach 600,000,000 quarters a year, even to-day; in '85 it was 19,210,695 quarters! As Mr. Williamson unkindly points out in his valuable 'British Industries and Foreign Competition,' the £5 of Mr. Jeans's imagination sinks therefore to 2s. 4½d.

\* I am using a halfpenny by way of illustration, because a five-shilling rise in Wheat means a halfpenny rise in a quartern loaf, and a five-shilling impost on Foreign Corn would go far to stay the ebbing life of English tillage. It is the amount usually, and I think rightly, advocated. I am here admitting the unsupported assumption that the duty would mean an increased price all round to the same amount.

*Agricultural Depression.*

The Farmer was ever a grumbler ; but during the last two decades he has had ample cause to grumble. Notwithstanding the decline in Wheat which set in with Corn Law Repeal and its outcome, the increased importation of Foreign Corn, the state of Agriculture did not become desperate all at once : various circumstances conspired to uphold a measure of prosperity. But about '79—a few years earlier in some districts—Agricultural Depression set in, and set in to a degree which has damped the cheeriness of the most optimistic Government officials. '79 was a woefully lean year. The yield per acre of Wheat was less than in any recorded year, being only  $15\frac{1}{2}$  bushels against the 30 bushels of '78 ; and so we had people talking of bad seasons as the dominant factor in the Depression. The good folks who argued in this way omitted from their consideration the fact that a low yield of Wheat does not inevitably imply a depressed agricultural industry, for a thin crop means the using up of Wheat stored from a previous year, with an enhanced price. But there were no such compensations in '79. The price of Wheat was lower than in the previous fat year, though the '78 figure was 10s. 4d. a quarter below the price in '77, the average for the three years being as follows : '77, 56s. 9d. ; '78, 46s. 5d. ; '79, 43s. 10d. The explanation of this phenomenon is found in the Import Returns. In '78 we imported less than *fourteen million* quarters of Wheat and Flour, but in '79 our Import rose to more than *seventeen million* quarters. Unhampered Foreign Importation, therefore, is the direct and obvious cause of the trouble, in that it prevents the English agriculturist from getting any compensation for his losses in bad seasons. The Depression, which set in with '79, has been continuous ;

moreover, it has been of so clamant a character that two Royal Commissions (the second one of monumental character) have already sat upon the question; and Royal Commissions are not usually appointed until the matters inquired into are in a bad way indeed. The Depression covers practically the whole field of rural industry; yet it is most marked in Wheat-growing districts, and if the cultivation of Wheat were set on its legs again, it would lighten enormously.

I do not propose to fill these pages with evidence to prove the fact of Agricultural Depression; though, if the attacks directed against my previous efforts to point out the existence of depression in other industries be a guide, I may expect that some critics will question its very existence. Yet it is difficult to imagine hardihood carried to this pitch. Should a pugnacious reader contend that British Agriculture is not suffering acutely, I refer him to the evidence laid by experts before the Royal Commission on Agriculture. I have only space for one or two short extracts. Mr. Joseph Martin, a Cambridgeshire farmer, was asked to describe 'the condition of things' in his district during the last few years. His reply is this: 'It is impossible to imagine anything worse than we are at present'; and he added: 'Wheat is the principal growth.\*' Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who had given evidence before the Duke of Richmond's Committee at the beginning of the Eighties as to the depression then existing, appeared before the present Commission also, and, speaking of the intervening twelve years, said: 'Matters are very much worse than they were then.†' And Sir Michael's evidence from the West Country, and Mr. Martin's from the East, are confirmed for the North by Mr.

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Q. 3891.

† *Ibid.*, Q. 6026.

Dobson, of the Cumberland Farmers' Association. Asked, 'What is the condition of agriculture in your district?' he replied: 'It is very much worse now than it was in the Seventies.\*' If the sceptic wants further demonstration, let him cast his eye down the columns headed 'Condition of Agriculture' in the Digest to the Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence.†

The great immediate cause of Agricultural Depression is Foreign Competition. The witnesses before the last Royal Commission unanimously attested their conviction that this was so. I say unanimously because the one witness (Mr. J. F. Rolleston) who stated his belief that it was not, practically went on to admit that it was, when, in answer to a question about foreign competition and prices, he said: 'If no foodstuffs came in from abroad for twelve months, the price of foodstuff would very largely rise.' Let us, therefore, consider Foreign Importation in a little detail.

### *Our Alien Bread.*

The foreign countries which provide our principal supplies of Wheat (including Meal and Flour) are the United States, Russia, and the Argentine Republic; then Roumania, the Austrian Territories, Turkey, France, Chile, and Germany. Here is our Import for '95:

	Grain. cwts.	Meal and Flour. cwts.
United States ... ..	27,084,120	13,131,850
Russia ... ..	23,017,035	34,840
Argentina ... ..	11,400,360	—
Roumania ... ..	2,022,200	9,500
Austria ... ..	—	1,305,760
Turkey ... ..	1,300,230	490
France ... ..	2,900	1,125,990
Chile ... ..	1,038,900	1,200
Germany ... ..	752,990	243,870

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Q. 13,057.

† C. 8146, 1396.

All these countries, with the exception of the United States, are rapidly increasing their shipments to this country; and that the United States should be the sole exception is ominous from more than one point of view. American wheat is the best. From the Consumer's standpoint, therefore, it is unsatisfactory to know that lower-class grain from Russia and the Argentine is superseding higher-class grain from the States. From the Farmer's it is equally unsatisfactory to learn that the lower-priced Foreign Grains with which he has to compete are flooding the market at the expense of the higher-priced. We import also from our own Possessions; but from British India and Australasia together our '95 Import only reached 14,134,170 cwts. of Grain and 2,416,610 cwts. of Meal and Flour. Our total Import in '95 from foreign countries and British Possessions was as follows: Wheat in grain, 81,749,955 cwts.; and Wheat-Meal and Flour, 18,368,410 cwts.\* Combining the two in equivalent weight of grain, we get 107,261,636 cwts. in '95, against 96,702,072 cwts. in '94, and against 67,021,886 cwts. in '86.† An actual increase in our Wheat Import in ten years of 40,239,750 cwts.—a relative increase, that is, of over 60 per cent.—must surely, considered with the woeful decrease in our own Wheat Acreage, convince everyone that, if the Home Industry is to be saved at all, it is high time the process of salvation were begun. It is worthy of record that European countries have increased their Wheat Acreage in recent years. This applies even to Germany, whose marvellous growth in manufacture was compatible with an increase of 300,000 wheat acres between '83 and '93.

\* As given in the Statistical Abstract.

† These combined figures are taken from the Board of Agriculture's Returns, and are somewhat higher than the Board of Trade's figures as given in the Statistical Abstract.

England, on the other hand, is not increasing her manufactures, and her agriculture is fast going the way of the Dodo.

*Why the Foreigner Beats Us.*

I cannot make this section exhaustive. It would take me many pages, and the examination of many side-issues and correlative circumstances, to do so. Briefly, however, Production abroad is cheaper than Production at home. Mr. W. J. Harris, who has an extensive knowledge of wheat-farming both in England and abroad, and who was sent by the Devon Chamber of Agriculture to give evidence before the Royal Commission, made estimates of the comparative costs of production on English and Foreign Wheat Farms.\* His conclusion was that the Foreigner (in a gold currency country) had a nett advantage of 40s. an acre over the Englishman, and he calculated thus: The ease with which his soil is worked, including lack of preparation and the saving in ploughing and harvesting, is equal to an advantage of 40s. an acre over the Englishman; the absence of weeding=2s.; certain harvest weather and continuous instead of rotatory crops=20s.; the English farmer's use of manures and growth of intermediate crops for fertilizing, which probably do not pay expenses and rent as well=20s.; the English farmer's rent and tithe=15s.; his rates and taxes=5s. That makes the Foreigner's advantage over the English Farmer 102s. per acre. To balance this are the disadvantages which he suffers at the Englishman's hands, calculated as follows: Freight and insurance=15s. per acre; short yield of foreign land compared with English=50s. per acre. Thus the Englishman has an advantage over the Foreigner of

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence (C. 7400-1), Q. 3437-41.

65s. per acre, and the Foreigner an advantage over the Englishman of 102s. per acre : nett gain to the Foreigner 37s. per acre ; or (if you add 3s. saved by American and Colonial farmers in the cost of seed), 40s. per acre. These respective advantages and disadvantages are in a measure conjectural ; and no doubt other experts would not arrive at the same figures in every case. I should hardly think, for example, that ' certain harvest weather ' would be included by everyone in the list of the Foreigner's advantages. On the other hand, Mr. Harris's estimate, compared with those made by others, puts the Englishman's position in a comparatively favourable light. Calculations based on the figures relating to 25,000 farms, checked by the returns of 4,000 experts, show that in America the total cost per acre is as follows : In the New England States, 84s. per acre ; in the Middle States, 75s. ; in the Southern and Western States, 45s. ; in South Dakota as low as 35s. 8d.\* Estimates for England run from 100s. to 160s. per acre. Further, these estimates have in view only the Farmer in countries where the money standard is the same as our own. In places where he lives under a silver or paper currency system, these advantages are (for the purpose of competition with English industry) tremendously enhanced. The silver or paper country Farmer pays in depreciated silver or paper, and receives in the English market in appreciated gold : whereby he reaps a handsome profit, and is able to cut prices to a tune which in gold countries his competitor cannot endure. This explains our declining import from America (and the Western Farmer's vote at the late Presidential Election) ; it also explains the rapid growth at American expense of our Wheat-Import from the Argentine and other silver and

\* See Major Craigie's evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture, Vol. III. of Minutes of Evidence, p. 236.



paper countries ; it further explains (the main point for our consideration) the English Farmer's inability to profit by the American Farmer's misfortune. The use by our rivals of a depreciated currency is a most serious factor in the situation ; and when, as in the case of Argentina, you have also immense natural advantages and a growing country, the word ' serious ' seems hardly adequate to the position.

Mr. Harris rightly lists Rates and Taxes in his table of the English Farmer's disadvantages. It is worth noting that Foreign States (particularly those new lands where the competition with English Wheat is so acute) refrain from burdening their agriculturists with taxes for Revenue. They make the Foreign Importer contribute to their Revenue, and by so doing at once relieve their people from taxation, and protect their industrial enterprises. The English Government, on the other hand, is so consumed with Cobdenism that it will not take a penny toll from the Foreign Importer who is crushing out a home industry : it prefers to make its Revenue a matter of new burdens on the back of the already over-burdened. It wrongs the Farmer both passively and actively : it leaves him unprotected, and it so adds to his burdens that he is less and less able to protect himself. In Cobden's time it would have been said that he needed not State Protection, because he had Natural Protection in the shape of freight charges ; and, as a fact, many votes for Repeal were won on these grounds. Cobden's disciples to-day usually (there are rash exceptions) keep this argument of their Master well in the background, for the sake of the Master's reputation. *The cost of carriage from New York to London is less than the freight from Liverpool to London.*

*Rehabilitation.*

So much for the position. How, and how far, can it be remedied? I am assuming that my readers are mostly with me in thinking that the rehabilitation of English Wheat is desirable. There are people, I know, who regard the matter with indifference. I have been told by one gentleman (well known in the London County Council: a writer on industrial subjects) that he is more than indifferent to the fate of English Agriculture: he is positively anxious for its destruction; field industries being, in his view, quite too brutalizing an occupation for Englishmen, and English land being (to quote his words) 'too valuable to be wasted on agriculture.' I do not suppose that his standpoint is shared by a sufficient number to be worth the trouble of abolishing: I give it as an instance of the latent hostility (which is what indifference practically amounts to) prevalent in certain quarters. Also, it is sometimes averred that the Baker views with more than complaisance the presence of Foreign Flour in the market, because that Flour, being drier than English, absorbs about 10 per cent. more water, and is, therefore, more profitable to the practical seller of bread. This may or may not be the case: if it be, such hostility on the part of one small section of the British public will but intensify the desire of other people that English-grown Corn shall regain a proper footing. A very common argument against attempts at rehabilitation is that, when an industry is found not to pay, it is time to give it up, as Nature is against its prosecution. The argument is, indeed, the dialectical stand-by of Free Trade Optimists, and it is freely applied to the Wheat Question. But it happens to be utterly inapplicable. As Mr. Harris's estimate (referred to above) shows, English Wheat Land is 50s. an acre more fruitful than

the average Foreign Land, which beats it in the market. Nature backs the English Farmer : what hampers him is the supineness of his Government.

It is sometimes questioned if England could now produce all the Wheat she needs ; and it is assumed by many people that she could not. Such an assumption has not, I think, sufficient basis. Eight million acres under Wheat would grow all the bread we need. Now, in '67 we had 3,640,051 acres under Wheat in the United Kingdom ; it surely cannot be contended that our soil is so sterile and unsuited to Wheat-growing that this amount could not be multiplied by two and a quarter, seeing that our total acreage to-day—cropped, bare, fallow, and grass (exclusive of nursery grounds, woods and plantations, mountain and heath)—is 47,882,099 acres. But should it, for the sake of other rural industries, be deemed undesirable that 8,000,000 acres be given up to Wheat, we might easily import our fill from our own Possessions. We must, of course, take into consideration that fall in Land which the years of Depression have induced. Disuse has sent a great deal to temporary rack and ruin, and we should have to pay a big bill for repairs. After all, however, that would only be a disagreeable condition ; it could be no insuperable bar ; the abandoned soil might be restored to its pristine fertility at a cost which, according to expert opinion, would not, even in bad cases, exceed £10 per acre. It would amount to a largish sum, but nations, like individuals, must pay the price of their folly.

But the rehabilitation will never come about so long as the unchecked and increasing competition of cheaper-producing Foreign Countries remains to threaten the British Farmer with continuous losses on his Wheat. By this I do not mean that the high prices of some

earlier years must be re-established. The cost of Production is less than it was, and a rise of a very few shillings on the low prices ruling of late would, unless rents went up, allow the Farmer a margin of profit. But most landlords might be trusted not to attempt such a rise in rent as would 'kill the trade,' and send Wheat back into the Slough of Despond; if they did, the Land Court would be necessary, and would be effective also. As I have said, an increase of 5s. in the price of Wheat is equivalent only to a rise of a halfpenny on the quartern loaf, and the advantage would surely be worth that! (A *uniform* duty on all foreign wheat and flour is not desirable. The tariff would need to be heavier against silver and paper countries than against gold ones.) It is a piece of Protection, the smallest conceivable; yet not only would it save a great national industry from gradual extinction: it would also restore its prosperity, and it would indirectly enhance the prosperity of others. Moreover, the heightened price could doubtless be reduced as time went on. We have not reached the end of cheapened processes; and let the British Farmer be secured by his Government against unfair inroads, and the encouragement would spur him to continued effort and experiment. It is his condition of despair which hampers his methodic advance. If you want proof of this, you can find it in the fact that that advance has been, and is, most rapid in countries like the United States and New South Wales, where favouring conditions have put alertness and heart into the husbandman.

I am not contending that Protection is the one thing needed. What I am contending is, that without it other remedies would be useless, or at least would fail of their full effect. At present it is difficult not to feel apologetic when telling the Farmer to brace himself to fresh exer-

tions, and to agitate for, or to adopt, the various improvements suggested as props to his dilapidated industry. True, some of these improvements are vitally necessary, and Protection would not diminish their necessity. But neither do they diminish the necessity for Protection. This necessity is present in all departments of Agriculture, but in few is it so evident as in Wheat; that is why I am here limiting my consideration to Protection. Later, I propose to call your attention to such matters as Transport, Organization, and Education. I am omitting their consideration now, because they are of greater moment in the departments of rural industry of which I shall treat hereafter. With respect to Wheat, they are of minor importance. It is not the want of cheap and easy Transport which is a main source of the Wheat-Grower's troubles: he is undersold in his own market-town. Organization is of importance chiefly where each individual Farmer's product is small in quantity: the Wheat harvested on a farm is usually of considerable bulk. Nor is the want of Technical Education very palpable: our Farmers know as a rule how to get a good Wheat Crop out of the ground without the aid of Professors of Agriculture. Agricultural Banks are invaluable aids to the small agriculturist in need of capital; but while our cultivation of Wheat has to contend with the hostile, dangerous, and depressing forces now at work, the easy access to capital which an Agricultural Bank affords, might have the undesirable effect of tempting the Farmer into paths which end in bankruptcy if he used the bank for borrowing money wherewith to cultivate Wheat-lands. I am also leaving out of present consideration the matter of Burdens upon Land, which can, I think, be better dealt with separately. Its omission here must not be taken to imply that I underrate its importance.

*Bounties.*

Advocates of the Wheat-Farmer often urge the institution of a bonus on his product. Corn Bounties are not unknown either in the history of England or in the modern practice of other wheat-growing countries. But I take this form of Protection to be unwise. When a State starts bounty-giving, it does not know where it will stop, or, rather, it often does not find itself able to stop at any point, and it may easily be landed in the wretched plight of the Continental Powers with their Sugar Bounties. The granting of Bounties is an artificial stimulus to production; that tends to over-production; and *that* means ruin to the industry, or something very like it, except the State take on itself a tremendous and a wasteful burden. A Bounty on Wheat, moreover, is not necessary. An Import Duty is enough, more particularly if the Revenue derived by the State therefrom be used in relief of some of the heavy burdens on Land. Aid of that kind would not have the bad effect of an artificial stimulus.

## OATS.

In respect of Oats there is no decline in acreage; on the contrary, there is a rise: the decline is confined to price, which in '95 averaged but 1s. 9d. a bushel. As the average price for the last Septennial Period is 2s. 3d., a very sensible diminution is evident. The case shows worse if we go back a little farther: the average price for the Septennial Period ending with '85 was 2s. 8½d. a bushel, and for that ending '75, 3s. 2½d. a bushel. Our import of Oats has increased, and in a greater ratio than the acreage at home. In '75 we imported 12,435,888 cwts.; in '85, 13,057,189 cwts.; in '95, 15,528,310 cwts.: an increase of nearly 25 per cent. in the twenty years.

Our own land under Oats was 4,176,177 acres in '75; 4,268,472 acres in '85; 4,512,433 acres in '95: an increase of a little over 8 per cent. These facts, coupled with the fall in prices, indicate but too clearly that there is no enhanced prosperity in Oats to set against the mournful depression in Wheat.

## BARLEY.

Barley is in worse case. Our land under Barley has diminished. It amounted to 2,751,362 acres in '75; to 2,447,169 acres in '85; to 2,346,367 acres in '95 ('95 showing a substantial increase over the preceding ten years and over the succeeding year, the explanation being a seasonal one). The price also has diminished. The Septennial Average for the period ending with '75 was 4s. 10d. a bushel; for that ending with '85 it was 3s. 11½d.; for that ending with '95 it was 3s. 2½d. But the Import has increased. It was 11,049,476 cwts. in '75; 15,366,160 cwts. in '85; 23,618,867 cwts. in '95. These statistics speak for themselves, and the most of what I have said about Wheat applies also to Barley. There is, however, one remedy which concerns not Wheat, but is of vast importance to Barley. I give it in the words of the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture's Recommendations, appended to its Report on the condition of local Agriculture: 'A Pure Beer Act should be passed, charging an extra duty upon all beer made from other substances than barley, malt, and hops.' Barley-growers set much store by this. That some remedy for their distressful state is sorely wanted is evident to all who have studied it.

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## II.

*THE MEAT MARKET.*

'Down corn, up horn.' So runs the proverb in the countryside. That corn is down my readers know, but it is not so certain that 'horn' is 'up.' True, much arable land has been turned to the uses of stock-raising; true also, the Depression in Agriculture has been least felt on those farms which gave pasture the preference over rotatory crops. But this is not to say, after the Giffen formula, that our loss on Wheat has been compensated by a growth in Stock. And this failure of the Compensation Principle is all the more remarkable because, though the consumption of Wheat per head of the population remains to-day pretty much the same as at any period during the last sixty years, the consumption of Meat per head is very considerably increased. We are confronted, then, with these disquieting facts: (1) There are many more in these Islands to eat Meat than ever there were; (2) the effective appetite (to borrow an adjective from the technology of Economics) of these people is much greater than of old; (3) the diminution in Wheat has placed many thousands of acres at the Grazier's disposal, while the manufacture and the importation of cattle foods have made possible the fattening of many more beasts; (4) the increase in Home-grown Meat during the last thirty years has been so slight that not only has it failed to keep pace with the increase in consumption, but also it has failed even to supply the same actual quantity per head; and (5) the material for the increased consumption is, of course, supplied from overseas.



*Where We Stand.*

The position is summarized in the appended table, whose compilation was suggested by the table drawn up by Major Craigie in illustration of a paper read by him before the Montreal Meeting of the British Association in '84. Indeed, my first two lines of figures are practically that gentleman's; only he compiled in years, and my averages are triennial. (I should add that my method commends itself to Major Craigie also, as affording a sound view of annual production.) The figures for the latter periods are of my own calculation, and the method of estimating the Home Production is that adopted in '71, which has been in general use, with no material fluctuations, ever since. According to this formula, every 1,000 head of Cattle of all ages = 67 tons of Beef or Veal; every 1,000 Sheep = 12½ tons of Mutton or Lamb; every 1,000 Pigs = 69½ tons of Bacon, Ham or Pork.

*Meat of all Kinds Consumed in the United Kingdom.*

## AVERAGE ANNUAL CONSUMPTION.

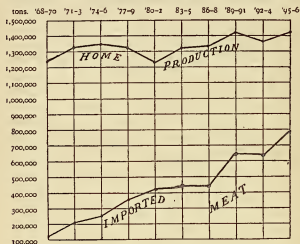
Date.	Home.	Foreign*	Total.	Home per head.	Foreign per head.	Total per head.
	tons.	tons.	tons.	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.
'68-70	1,267,000	123,699	1,390,699	91·81	8·96	100·77
'78-80	1,284,000	452,158	1,736,158	84·25	29·66	113·91
'88-90	1,354,984	560,241	1,915,225	81·62	33·76	115·38
'91-93	1,425,662	636,719	2,062,381	83·72	37·45	121·17
'94-96	1,388,817	759,637	2,148,454	79·51	43·44	122·95

A view in greater detail of the relative increases in Home and Foreign Meat is shown in the diagram on page 26. I submit that table and diagram bear out my propositions to the letter. Roughly, a third of the Meat at present consumed in these Islands is grown

\* Includes Colonial.

outside them; a quarter of a century ago the Foreign Importation was considerably less than a tenth of the whole. And this tendency to deal with foreign butchers, so far from slackening, proceeds in accelerating ratio, as is shown by the Returns for '96.

*Production of Home Meat and Import of Foreign Meat.*



*Our Foreign Supplies.*

Let us now dissect this Import. And first, for that of Meat imported alive. The following table shows the items under this head, and its advance in thirty years. (N.B.—The Import of Swine is not now large enough to call for separate notice.)

*Imports of Live Animals.*

	'67.	'77.	'87.	'95.	'96.
Oxen and Bulls, {					
Cows and Calves {	177,948	201,193	295,961	415,565	562,553
Sheep and Lambs ...	539,716	874,055	971,404	1,065,470	769,592

The bulk of this live stock comes from the United States; next in the scale is the Argentine Republic; and British North America is third. And note here that these animals are killed and dressed in the British fashion, and masquerade as British Meat, under the disingenuous description of Home-killed, in a form which often eludes even expert detection. Here follows, in annual averages of quinquennial periods, a table showing in detail the Dead Meat Import for the last thirty years:

*Average Annual Import of Dead Meat into the United Kingdom.*

	'66-70.	'76-80.	'86-90.	'91-95.	'96.
	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.
Beef, fresh .. ..	27,280	483,223	1,108,013	2,020,574	2,659,700
" salted .. ..	206,681	241,012	234,583	237,187	247,267
Otherwise preserved* .. ..	—	—	—	453,950	401,281
<b>TOTAL BEEF .. ..</b>	<b>233,961</b>	<b>730,235</b>	<b>1,342,596</b>	<b>2,711,711</b>	<b>3,308,248</b>
Mutton,† fresh .. ..	—	—	1,061,210	2,047,930	2,395,158
Mutton,* preserved .. ..	—	—	—	106,153	122,851
<b>TOTAL MUTTON .. ..</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,061,210</b>	<b>2,154,133</b>	<b>3,018,009</b>
Fresh pork .. ..	20,517	24,083	127,785	182,131	299,411
Salted " .. ..	170,447	360,368	266,782	217,448	255,339
Bacon .. ..	579,518	3,420,505	3,285,519	3,668,699	4,549,526
Hams .. ..	44,158	689,391	957,835	1,144,033	1,459,412
<b>TOTAL PIG MEAT .. ..</b>	<b>814,640</b>	<b>4,494,347</b>	<b>4,637,921</b>	<b>5,241,408</b>	<b>6,563,688</b>
<b>UNENUMERATED MEAT .. ..</b>	<b>107,266</b>	<b>617,331</b>	<b>640,002</b>	<b>329,018</b>	<b>220,125</b>
<b>TOTAL DEAD MEAT .. ..</b>	<b>1,153,867</b>	<b>5,841,913</b>	<b>7,681,729</b>	<b>10,436,270</b>	<b>13,170,070</b>

I commend this table to your very careful consideration; for if ever figures were eloquent, these figures are. They are not selected for the purpose of making a sensation. On the contrary, I have been careful not to

\* Included in "Unenumerated" prior to '95.

† " " " " '82.

give the most reckless Cobdenite occasion to blaspheme. No solitary loophole to such an occasion will he discover in the above table, the figures in which are extracted from the Agricultural Returns for '95 and the Board of Trade Returns for '96. Uniform dates, a long period, quinquennial averages, quantities instead of values—all the statistical luxuries for which my critics languished when they found the simple fare of *Made in Germany* too rough for their palates—are here. And the result is a damning record of our failure to feed ourselves. Look at Beef: Three and a third million cwts. imported, against less than a quarter of a million a generation back. Look at Mutton: A generation—half a generation—ago, the annual Import was not large enough for separate enumeration; but it was over a million cwts. at the end of the Eighties, and since then it has nearly trebled itself. Look at Bacon: The Import is nearly eightfold greater than that of a generation since; Foreign Hams have multiplied themselves thirty-three times! Lump the items together, and you find that our Import of Meat has multiplied more than ninefold in thirty years. Do you care to know who our Purveyors are? Here is a list, with their bills for '94, the latest year for which complete Returns are available:

*Foreign Countries.*

	Beef.	Mutton.	Pig-Meat.	Unenum- erated.	Total.
	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.
United States	2,216,143	26,747	3,790,998	102,709	6,136,597
Argentina ...	6,511	587,076	551	17,472	611,610
Denmark ...	25	3,839	831,988	14,448	850,300
Holland ...	93	199,969	159,293	110,584	469,939
Other Foreign Countries...	29,621	36,561	127,250	37,377	228,975
TOTAL ...	2,252,393	854,192	4,910,080	282,590	8,299,255

*British Possessions.*

	Beef.	Mutton.	Pig-Meat.	Unenumerated.	Total.
	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.
Australia ...	375,433	562,785	653	38,917	977,788
New Zealand	3,057	983,336	1,308	15,617	1,003,318
Canada ...	6,470	1,285	312,721	2,991	323,467
Other British Possessions	118	6,396	28	24	6,566
TOTAL ...	385,078	1,553,802	314,710	57,549	2,311,139

And, as I have shown, these figures would all be very much higher for '96. It may be of interest to note that during that year an Importer, hitherto unheard of, came into being: Patagonia shipped 24,074 carcasses of Mutton to this country. They arrived in July, and, though described as 'meaty,' were deemed somewhat too coarse for English liking. But the last of them was sold by the end of November: the average price being 2½d. a lb.!

*A Question of Prices.*

So much for statistics. From the Position this inquiry shifts to the How and Why. Our increased dependence on Foreign Flesh is, as with most Imports, a question of price. We do not eat Frozen Mutton and Refrigerated Beef because an Arctic temperature improves their flavour, or because the breeds and pasturage in other countries make better Meat than we can grow. We import them because they are cheap. Opinions vary as to the merits of Imported Meat: some hold that there is no Meat, either for flavour or for nutritive quality, to compare with Home-grown; others contend that certain kinds—as prime New Zealand Mutton and North American Beef—are equal, or almost equal, to the best the Agricultural Hall can show; all are agreed that certain sorts are

distinctly inferior to any decent Home-Grown product, and all are agreed that, however the quality stand, the prices are distinctly lower. This is a matter of demonstration. You cannot buy Southdown Mutton at 2½d. per lb., even wholesale; but the River Plate variety sells at about that price. Nor can you buy a leg of Welsh retail at 5½d.; but that is the quoted price for legs from Argentina. The prices of Imported Meat vary almost as much as the prices of Home-Grown vary, but they keep about the same relative ratio for both kinds. Here are the wholesale prices for last Christmas week, according to Messrs. Weddel and Co.'s chart: Scotch Mutton was selling at 6¾d. per lb., New Zealand at 4½d., River Plate and Australian at 2½d., New Zealand Lamb made 4½d., American Chilled Beef (hind-quarters) 5½d., Australian (hind-quarters) 3d., Australian (fore-quarters) 2¾d. Considering that even after the freezing process the quality of New Zealand Mutton is to most palates very little inferior to the quality of Scotch, and that many hard-pressed householders could scarce resist the seductions of twopenny-farthing Meat (whatever its quality), the alarming increase in our Import of Mutton cannot excite surprise. Of course, these cheap Imports have their effect upon the prices of English Meat. Those prices have so fallen in recent years—as far, at least, as the English grazier is concerned—that it has become in many places exceedingly hard for him to make stock-feeding profitable; and in this way another element has been introduced into the hell-broth of Agricultural Depression. In the period '66-70 the average wholesale price of Beef at the London Central Market ranged from 4½d. to 7d. per lb.; for the succeeding quinquennial average it was 5½d. to 8d.; whilst in '95 it was from 2½d. to 6½d. In the same way Mutton commanded from 5d. to 7¾d. in the period '66-70; 4½d. to 9d. in the period '76-80;

and only 2½d. to 7½d. in '95. It is fair to add that there is a certain amount of presumptive evidence that the low-priced Import has brought Meat within the reach of the very poor (though practical experts have it that the very poor know the taste of English Cow and Bull Beef far better than that of American Ox Beef: which is a very much costlier commodity). Still, there is no reason in the nature of things why the British Grazier should not be able to sell cheap, and at a profit, Meat as good as the cheapest stuff imported, if certain reforms were effected in his industry. At present inquirers among Grazing Farmers have to listen to such depressing statements as this: 'Fattening bullocks made 2s. per stone less now than six years ago. Now Beef sells at 6s., 7s., and 8s. per stone. At one time 12s. was no uncommon price.' Or this: 'I used to make 10s. per stone for beef, but can only make 7s. 6d. now.'\*

*The Purveyor of Meat.*

We are much afflicted with gentility; and the Butcher has succumbed with the rest. He is no longer a Butcher: he is a Purveyor of Meat. And in his case, contrary to the general rule, the word 'genteel' is the right word. The Meat he purveys is, as of yore, prime Scotch, and best Welsh or Southdown; but many of the beasts whose remnants fill his cart have never known the taste of Scots or English grass. This was aforetime a trade secret, but impunity made the secret something less wind-proof and less water-tight; and when the House of Lords Committee sat upon the subject in '93, many things were trumpeted abroad, the knowledge of which had hitherto been locked within the good Purveyor's bosom. But readers of Blue Books are few, the majority

\* See Report of Mr. R. H. Rew on Norfolk to Royal Commission on Agriculture.

not having yet learned that Blue Books are often some fourscore times as interesting as 'problem novels.' Here, then, are certain items excerpted from the Minutes of the House of Lords' Committee.

There was Mr. William Theobald, of Croydon. Being Manager of a Colonial Meat business, he was free to recount his experiences as an Assistant in the West End:—'I should think three parts of the beef sold during that time to customers out-doors was American beef charged at English prices.' His enforced condonation of dishonesty pursued him when he left the West and took a situation in the City:—'I was there for three and a half years, and they did the same.' Still bent on that eternal quest of an honest man, he fled to the virtuous air 'a little way out in the suburbs'; and 'they did the same.' Moreover, he found hypocrisy waiting on dishonesty:—'They condemn the American beef, and they sell it at the same time.' But his mouth was sealed:—'We should most likely have been discharged if we had informed the customers that it was American beef.'\* Thus Mr. William Theobald (of Croydon).

Mr. Farrow, private secretary to Mr. Yerburgh, M.P. (who had introduced a Bill dealing with the evil), made investigations on behalf of Lord Onslow's Committee. Accompanied by a practical man, he went round the West End shops, visited six, bought a sirloin at each, at each one asked if the Meat was Scotch, and at five was told 'that they kept nothing but Scotch on the premises.' Mr. Farrow's companion, assisted by another butcher, who was hostile to the object of Mr. Farrow's inquiry, examined the joints at home; but he was forced to admit that four of the six were 'decidedly American,' and only one was doubtful. The sixth and last was

\* Select Committee of House of Lords on Marking of Foreign Meat, etc., Minutes of Evidence, pp. 148-9.



Scotch, but in the shop at which it was bought the butcher was engaged in cutting up a piece of Scotch Beef, and Mr. Farrow asked for a few pounds of that particular carcase; so the one just joint did not go far towards redeeming the character of the unjust five. Mr. Farrow's companion had assisted in a very large West End shop, which professed to sell only English and Scotch Meat; but during his stay there he saw no more than six hind-quarters of Scotch: all the rest was American. Then Mr. Farrow visited the East End and Islington, and found that four joints out of five he bought were undoubted American; and in each case he asked the Butcher:—'Is this Scotch?' and in each case the Butcher solemnly informed him that 'he kept nothing else.' Then Mr. Farrow, as well as other witnesses, adduced the clamant case of a certain Old-Established Welsh Mutton House; and, of that Old Establishment, 'there is scarcely anything else,' Mr. Farrow said, 'but New Zealand or River Plate mutton sold, and it is all labelled "Real Welsh Mutton," marked usually at 10½d. a lb.\*' It was at this Old-Established House that Mr. Edward Stevens called one day. (Mr. Stevens was a retired butcher of forty years' standing.) He asked for a piece of lamb, and pointed out the carcase from which he wanted it cut. 'What class of mutton would you pronounce this?' he asked. And to him the shopman:—'Well, Welsh; it may be Mountain Welsh.' Mr. Stevens swore it was New Zealand; and as he was on a Board of Guardians dealing largely in New Zealand Meat (for paupers), his experience of Frozen Mutton was undeniable.†

Mr. James Kay tendered evidence as President of the

\* Select Committee of House of Lords on Marking of Foreign Meat, etc., Minutes of Evidence, pp. 31-2 and 143.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

Lancashire Federation of Farmers' Associations. He instanced Southport, a town of forty-one thousand five hundred inhabitants (a large proportion well-to-do), and some fifty-four butchers. To this witness a bank manager declared that in one week only three English animals were killed in Southport. Yet the Southport Butchers brooked no impertinent questioning of the nationality of the meat they sold, and the prices at which they sold it were, at any rate, English enough.\* Again, there was the strange case of the British Farmers' Supply Association, and of the Sussex Farmers' Central Meat Market. The titles of both establishments sprang from one fertile brain, and both were under one ownership. Nor did their proprietor's imagination halt at his own signboards. He would pin you labels announcing 'Prime Grass-Fed Lamb' on the shoulders of carcasses bearing all the visible signs of the frozen chamber. It should be added that on one occasion the salesman, being tackled, said the label was a mistake, and that the Grass-Fed Lamb was inside. The purchaser went inside, and came forth duly with a joint of Frozen!†

In addition to the Frozen and Chilled which comes into this country, there is, as I have shown, a large and increasing Import of Live Meat. At this point also the Purveyor finds occasion to deceive, and the beasts landed at Birkenhead and Deptford, and killed at these ports, are sold as 'Best Aberdeen Oxen,' or the like. At Hull there are discharged a number of Sheep and Lambs from Norway, and Mr. Craddock, a member of the National Federation of Butchers' and Meat Traders' Associations, stated to the Lords' Committee that he had seen these Norwegian sheep 'absolutely guaranteed in our

\* Select Committee of House of Lords on Marking of Foreign Meat, etc., Minutes of Evidence, p. 18.

† *Ibid.*, p. 80.

markets as good Scotch sheep.' It may be replied, on behalf of the Butchers, that the meat is sold to them in Smithfield as English or Scotch, and that they are less deceivers than deceived; but the effect of this retort is weakened if you reflect that expert Butchers pride themselves on being able to tell, not only the country, but (in the case of British Meat) the very county, whence a carcase comes. In truth, the situation is summarized by an exchange of winks between the Market Salesman and the Retail Butcher. In the words of one of those whom Mr. Farrow interviewed: 'The salesmen at Smithfield rob us, and we rob the public.' He might have added 'the producer'; for the increasing Import of Live Meat, especially as it can easily be sold for Home-fed, makes the British Grazier's struggle harder, and forces down such price as he can get.

*The Purveyor Indignant.*

But these disclosures were not made without protest. The Trade sent its representatives to the House of Lords to denounce the aspersions on its good name. The evidence of the Chief Butcher is instructive. Mr. William Coggan was Chairman of the London Butchers' Trade Society, and he talked at length to Lord Onslow's Committee. As to the Ready-Money or Chance Trade, he said it was 'absurd to suggest that fraud is here committed,' and he gave as his excellent reason 'that nothing is said, and less is cared, about the origin of the meat.' No doubt, nothing is said (by the Seller): that nothing is cared (by the Purchaser) is matter of opinion. Mr. Coggan adduced an additional reason: to wit, that 'the smallest possible profit is obtained,' which is curious as a reason, and dubious in point of fact. With respect to fraud in the Higher Class or Family Trade, Mr. Coggan was 'prepared to admit that there is a possibility of such

taking place, and perhaps, in isolated cases, it is done.' In view of the proofs submitted to their Lordships by Mr. Farrow and the rest, Mr. Coggan's notion of isolation would appear to be at once 'extensive and peculiar.' Throughout his evidence Mr. Coggan repelled with considerable warmth the suggestion that his trade was guilty of fraud. He did not rely entirely on his declaration that Foreign Meat was sold as English only in 'isolated cases': after the manner of a wise litigant, he brought out a second defence, which covered the 'isolated cases.' He contended that there was no fraud; that the customer was chiefly concerned about the price; that if the butcher supplied the customer with the best article obtainable at that price, he was under no obligation to disclose its origin; and that if the customer fancied he was eating Home-killed Meat when he was eating Imported, the customer was a fool for doing so, and no imputation of fraud rested on the Butcher.\* This is a point of casuistry, which would doubtless have commended itself to the Schoolmen, but which modern Britons, having neither expert knowledge nor the time to examine every joint which comes into the kitchen, but expecting English Meat when they pay English prices, are likely to resent. And your Butcher is no hardly-used trader: he cannot plead poverty or uncertain and meagre profits in justification of a lapse from virtue, for, saving your Publican, it would be difficult to denote a retailer whose makings are so great as his. Major Stacpole estimated† that, whereas other tradesmen are satisfied with 10, 15, or perhaps 20 per cent., your Butcher's percentage of profit runs from 30 to 50. Your Consumer, therefore, is entitled to resent the payment of 11d. per lb. for an English Sirloin

\* Select Committee of House of Lords on Marking of Foreign Meat, etc., *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 125-32.

† *Ibid.*, p. 54.

grown in America, which should be sold at 9d., or the giving of 10½d. per lb. for an English leg and the getting a New Zealander, which should be sold at 7d., or, still worse, some inferior stuff from the Plate, which is sold wholesale at 20 to 30 per cent. less than the New Zealander itself. It is bad enough that the Home industry should be injured by Foreign competition, though the Consumer gets an advantage in cheapened price. But when he gets no such advantage, and is cheated into the bargain, to the inflation of a Middleman's already ample profits, it is time to set about stopping the swindle.

*The Marking of Imported Meat.*

Herein, undoubtedly, consists the remedy for this evil of fraudulent sale. Bills to this end have been introduced into Parliament, and the Committee of the House of Lords, on whose Minutes of Evidence I have drawn for illustration, was appointed for the express purpose of investigating the practicability of extending the Merchandise Marks Act to Meat and other Foodstuffs. That investigation, so far as Meat is concerned, was a fairly exhaustive one. The Committee convinced itself by much expert and trustworthy evidence that the sale of Foreign as English Meat was extensively practised, and chiefly on those customers who were prepared to pay the higher prices Home-grown Meat commands. It also examined, with much detail, and aided by expert opinion, into the various methods suggested for checking fraud, and it arrived at the conclusion that such checking was practicable. It recommended that 'every person dealing in imported meat should register as such, and should fix a notice plainly exhibited over his shop that he is registered as a dealer in imported meat.' And it recommended for the detection of fraud 'that the inspection of retail butchers' shops should be made in the same way as under

the Food and Drugs Act, by duly qualified inspectors,' and that the Board of Agriculture should be invested with power to take action on behalf of the producers and consumers of food. This is the summary of its recommendations. The omission of one as to marking arose out of the conflicting opinions of witnesses. Yet the Committee, in the body of its Report, expressed a decided liking for the Mark, and pointed out that the difficulties were not insuperable; it suggested the use of sealed metal tags on the shank-bones of shoulders and legs of mutton (an existing and successful Jewish practice); and it expressed a preference for the system of marking by electric cautery, though in the undeveloped condition of the necessary mechanism, it hesitated to make its recommendation positive. So nothing has yet been done. I cannot but think that the Committee exhibited an excess of caution. An engineer made and experimented in its presence with an apparatus for marking the skin of meat by means of an electric wheel. His experiment was successful, and promised, with practice and development, to become yet more so; while the objection that such marking would injure the meat was satisfactorily disposed of: even Mr. Coggan's ingenious suggestion that an electric marking would induce putrefaction (on the analogy of a thunder-storm) failing to stand the test of proof. Again, if the electric pencil be not adopted, the possibilities of marking Meat are by no means exhausted. On the Continent Meat is commonly marked with an aniline dye pencil, not for the detection of Imported Meat (the European nations for the most part feed themselves), but as a guarantee, and the system works admirably. So, failing electric cautery, there is no reason why the aniline pencil or stamp should not be brought to bear on Imported carcasses, and used so extensively as to leave little room for fraud in the sale of small joints. There would remain

a certain possibility of fraud, as the dye-stamp might be removed, either by cutting away the marked skin, or by the use of chemical reagents. But a dye might be found to resist the action of ordinary acids and alkalis, and, for the rest, reliance might surely be placed on the official inspector. Also, the practice of such tricks would place the Butcher at the mercy of his assistants, who would necessarily be privy to the fraud, and who would thereby be placed in a first-class position for black-mailing—an added and probably sufficient terror to the would-be law-breaker.

*The Effect of Marking.*

The marking of Imported Meat is advocated in the interests of the Home Producer, the honest Butcher, the honest Importer, and the innocent Consumer. It is clear that the last three would be benefited by the system; but doubt has been insinuated as to its advantaging the first. The sceptic urges that, as consumers would be able to distinguish plainly between Imported and Home-killed, and would find by experiment that the former was good as well as cheap, they would gradually become regular and conscious purchasers. That the two kinds approximate in flavour much more nearly than many champions of British stock-raising will admit, is shown by the ease with which dishonest butchers defraud their customers; whilst nutritive qualities no doubt are roughly in agreement with flavour, at any rate in the public estimation. The bloodlessness of Frozen Mutton is to no small extent an affair of the kitchen; properly thawed and cooked it is not entirely anæmic. Beef, being the larger carcase, is less susceptible to freezing—or rather to thawing, for in that process the vesicles burst, and much blood runs away. But then, Frozen Beef is very little in the market; it is the American Beef

against which our Graziers have to contend the hardest ; and American Beef (having a short, quick journey) needs only chilling—a much less disastrous treatment. American Beef, too, is undoubtedly of high average quality : not so good as the best Scotch, but, according to expert opinion, of more uniform excellence than the second or third best Home. Moreover, the aid of bulls of the best British breeds, which American stock-raisers are wise enough to import, has been called in, and the quality is rapidly improving. So good, indeed, have the United States and Canadian cattle become, that the live Beef from over the Atlantic commands a price which is not much below that of the best Scotch. All these points strengthen the argument that people will in time get over their physical ‘prejudice’ (if that is the right word) against Imported Meat, though it may be hoped that common-sense patriotism will assist in staying the Foreigner more actively than it does now.

It does not follow that the branding of the Imported article would accelerate the conquest of ‘prejudice’; it would rather, I imagine, have an opposite effect. Butchers and Foreign and Colonial Importers have expressed very strong opinions as to the ‘disfigurement’ which marking would involve, and have urged it as a reason against the extending of the Merchandise Marks Act. But the Home-Grown-Only Butchers have proved rather too much ; their arguments and denunciations constitute an admission that the Mark would exercise a wholesome check on importation. Under the Mark they would have to act up to their motto, or discard it in favour of ‘Imported Meat Sold Here.’ In the former case their attitude, or (to be more correct) the attitude of the Salesmen from whom they buy, towards British stock-raisers would be a little less independent ; indeed, these persons would become entirely dependent on the British Grazier for supplies. It may therefore, I submit, be



regarded as proved that, though the marking of Imported Meat would not completely oust it from our midst (the success of Eastmans and the other open dealers in Imported Meat demonstrates as much), yet a certain proportion of the Import would cease, to the direct benefit alike of the Home-producer and of the consumer paying English prices, and indirectly to the benefit of the honest, in competition with the dishonest, butcher. And marking the country of origin would not be altogether injurious to Colonial trade; inasmuch as River Plate Stuff, which is being imported in an ever-increasing ratio, is sometimes fraudulently sold as Colonial. Compulsory branding would stop that.

As I am concerned now in stating a case rather than in suggesting remedies, I will not ask your consideration here of other reforms than this of marking. But I may remind you that British grazing will make no progress till other reforms are introduced, and especially those falling under the heads of Organization (including particularly Co-operation among Graziers), Transport, and Protection. Farther, should anyone contend that the Frozen Meat trade cannot possibly be killed, I may refer him to the example of France. According to the evidence given before the Marking of Foreign Meat Committee by Mr. William Cook, who represented a River Plate Company, France crushed the Frozen Meat trade out of existence—this by obliging the importer to leave the pluck in the sheep, and quarter it, and by imposing a duty amounting to about  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. a lb.,\* or, roughly, equal to 50 per cent. *ad valorem*.

NOTE.—At the time of going to press, the Agricultural Produce (Marks) Bill stands referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons. The Bill is a most useful measure, and will, if passed into

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\* Select Committee of House of Lords on Marking of Foreign Meat, etc., Minutes of Evidence, p. 122.

an Act, carry out the reform I have urged in this chapter ; but to this encomium I must make one exception. The Bill only provides for the marking of imported *dead* meat. This is not enough ; the interests of the British grazier demand that the carcasses of the animals imported alive and slaughtered at the port of debarkation should be marked likewise. It would be quite easy to enforce such a provision : without it home graziers will still be disadvantaged by the sale of cheap foreign meat as British ; and the patriotic consumer, who rejects the seductions of low-priced chilled beef and frozen mutton, will go on paying English prices for foreign-raised meat in the delusion that he is supporting the British farmer.

### III

#### *THE DAIRY.*

##### BACON AND HAMS.

As we have seen, there is a marked increase in recent years in the Import of Pig-meat. Let us particularize a little in the matter of Bacon and Hams. The shortest way is to relate the consumption per head in different years. Well, the annual consumption per head for the United Kingdom amounted to an average of 1s. 3d. for the five years '66-70 ; of 5s. 2d. for the five years '76-80 ; of 4s. 11d. for the five years '86-90 ; and of 5s. 7d. for the five years '91-95. The slight fall between '86 and '90, compared with the average of ten years earlier, does not imply any decreased consumption, but only a lowered price. There was an increase in quantity, as the following table shows :

*Average Annual Import of Bacon and Hams.*

	'66-70.	'76-80.	'86-90.	'91-95.	'96.
	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.	cwts.
Bacon ..	579,518	3,420,505	3,285,519	3,668,699	4,549,526
Hams ...	44,158	689,391	957,835	1,167,530	1,459,412

The chief sources of this supply are here tabulated :

*Import of Bacon and Hams in '95.*

BACON.

	Cwts.	£
United States ... ..	2,649,482	4,586,089
Denmark ... ..	1,018,980	2,504,697
Canada ... ..	268,886	500,835
Other Foreign Countries . .	129,533	331,570
Other British Possessions ... ..	1,587	2,788
<b>TOTAL</b> ... ..	<b>4,063,418</b>	<b>7,925,979</b>

HAMS.

	Cwts.	£
United States ... ..	1,203,157	2,697,486
Canada ... ..	81,707	186,141
Other Foreign Countries ... ..	4,352	13,701
Other British Possessions ... ..	302	690
<b>TOTAL</b> ... ..	<b>1,289,518</b>	<b>2,898,018</b>

From these figures you will note that we cannot comfort ourselves with the reflection that we are helping the Colonies; for less than One-Fifteenth of the Pigs concerned were stuck under the Union Jack. It may also be of interest to observe that Denmark is increasing her Export at a splendid pace. Thus :

*Our Import of Danish Bacon and Hams.*

'91.	'92.	'93.	'94.	'95.	'96.
cwts. 583,408	cwts. 675,882	cwts. 719,124	cwts. 768,618	cwts. 1,015,755	cwts. 1,222,114 (Bacon only).

In fact, little Denmark is rapidly becoming as formidable a menace to our Dairy Industries as Germany to our Manufactures. It was Germany, by-the-by, which, all

unwittingly—for German dealings with Denmark are not marked by deliberate benevolence—gave Denmark her start in Bacon-Curing. The Danes used to export their Pigs alive, mostly to Germany. In '87 swine-fever broke out in Denmark, and Germany prohibited the Danish Pig. But the Danes had learned the virtue of co-operation, and they started 'slaughtereries'—that is, co-operative Bacon-Curing Factories—for themselves, though hitherto Bacon-Curing was all but unknown among them. How they have fared my figures show. I may add that the Danish Government subsidizes heavily the steamships which carry Danish bacon to this country, and gives very low rates on the State railways.\* It has sent its swine-expert to England to buy Yorkshire boars for the improvement of the Danish breeds, and has defrayed the cost of a mission for the study of our Bacon-Curing methods.† Now the Dane boasts, in the words of a Co-operative Factory manager: 'We Danes are not afraid of any competition in this bacon-curing business. We have a Co-operative Creamery in every parish in the country, and with the separated milk and Black Sea barley we are able to raise a pig fit for the factory in six months, and to raise him cheaper than can be done in any country in Europe.'‡

#### *Fraudulent Pig-Meat.*

The Butcher is not alone in dishonesty: the Provision Dealer is with him hand to fist. I have shown you how immense is our Import of Foreign Hams and Bacon; yet experience tells that very little is sold in our pro-

\* Not long since it voted a subvention of 150,000 kroner (about £8,333) towards a steamship connexion between Esbjerg and Parkstone; and it is said that the grant is to be increased (see Report of Recess Committee: Mr. T. P. Gill's Report, p. 163).

† See Mr. T. P. Gill's interesting Report to the Irish Recess Committee, and *The Irish Homestead*, December 14, 1895.

‡ *The Irish Homestead*, December 14, 1895.

vision shops. What *we* buy is all 'Best Wiltshire,' or 'Superior Irish,' or 'Fine Yorkshire,' or occasionally, by way of a change, 'Cumberland.' Of course, the most of it is American or Danish. The method of deception varies. Sometimes the Bacon or the Ham is branded English. Then, because of that inconvenient piece of legislation, the Merchandise Marks Act, the words 'Produced in Denmark' (or whatever the country) are stamped on it also—but in tiny characters. This is when the Bacon is green, and the insignificant birthmark can be obliterated by the simple (and necessary) process of smoking. Or—a yet more frequent trick—the meat comes over unmarked; the brand, including the birthmark, is put upon the wrapper; this wrapper is removed before the retail dealer's shop is reached, and the Bacon is then ready for a tin ticket inviting the unsuspecting housewife to purchase 'Best Waterford.' Usually this fraudulent stuff is sold at a lower price than the genuine article commands—sometimes at a lower price than that at which the genuine article can be produced. Instances were adduced before the Committee on the Marking of Foreign Meat. An advertisement was shown which offered 'Real Wiltshire Bacon' at 6½d. a lb., and 'Splendid Wiltshire Hams' at 8d.; but Mr. Harris, of a famous Wiltshire firm, told the Committee that Wiltshire bacon could not be produced under 8d. or 9d. a lb. The British housewife in her practical pursuit of a bargain (which her husband thinks to secure by voting against Fair Trade) gives no consideration to these facts; she goes home delighting in the enterprising Mr. Jones's Home-Cured at 3d. a lb. less than that old-fashioned Mr. Smith's. Of course, this exceeding cheapness is only present when the stress of competition is felt; at other times, your virtuous Provision Dealer makes the Foreign article to approximate

in price more closely to the English one, whose name it bears. In any event both Producer and Consumer are damnified. The Producer has to cut his prices to the last farthing, in order to cope in some measure with the increasing Foreign competition; the theft of his brand tarnishes his repute, and induces the Customer to believe that Home-Curing is not so excellent a performance after all; while the Consumer is injured by contact with an inferior article, inasmuch as, according to current report, whatever the equality in breeding between English and Foreign Pigs, the English Pig is much better fed than his alien rival—a consideration of a certain importance, surely? For example, it is said that the American Pig is fed on the *ejecta* of maize-eating cattle, which cattle he must follow or starve: yet another argument for extending the Merchandise Marks Act.

Every Ham and every side of Bacon entering this country should be branded, deeply and plainly, with its birthmark; the good, easy trick of labelling the package only must be repressed, and in respect of imported 'Wet,' any attempt at deletion by means of the process of smoking should be heavily penalized. There is no possible room for the objection which interested persons profess to entertain in respect to Fresh Meat—that branding would be injurious. The best Home-cured is branded now, and suffers no harm thereby; the Meat is not injured, and the Mark is welcomed as a guarantee.

#### *Other Matters.*

Much harm is also wrought upon the home trade by the middleman's sweating. This is especially felt in Ireland, where the pig (as has been aptly said) is 'a sort of savings bank' to the cottager. But it is a savings bank which brings in a very meagre interest now. Mr.

R. A. Anderson, in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture, told of the existence of three and sometimes four middlemen who come between the cottager and the curing factory, and sweat his profits away.\* But Mr. Anderson is the indefatigable Secretary of a society which is striving hard, and with apparently favourable prospects, to induce these unfortunate pig-owners to start co-operative bacon factories for themselves, and so escape the vultures.

Admonitions to the British and Irish Dairy Farmer are not infrequent : for that he does not feed his pigs so assiduously as his Danish rival. And such admonitions are wholesome enough. The by-products of the Dairy might, in fact, be utilized after the Danish manner much more than they are ; and, doubtless, if the British Farmer took the tip, he could put on the market far larger consignments of Bacon and Hams, of equal quality and at a lower cost, and he would consequently be in a better position to compete with the Foreigner. But these admonitions need the encouragement of State Assistance. Something must be done to assist the English Producer in a market swamped with cheap Foreign stuff masquerading as Home, and eagerly seized upon by bargaining householders. Fraudulent sale must be penalized by a Marking Act. Also a Tariff Duty should be laid upon the Foreign Import. In addition, the killing and the marketing of Swine should be organized on a larger scale, and as a corollary cheap Transport facilitated between country and town : that so the Cobdenite Dream of Natural Protection to the Home Industry should become a fact—not, as now, a miserable fiction.

Finally, the Farmer must improve his feeding ; and it is cheering to learn that efforts are making (particularly

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III., p. 389.

in Ireland) to bring this about. For the aspersions cast upon the feeding of the American Pig are not true applied to the Danish. In Denmark they have been devoting special attention in recent years to the introduction not only of new breeds, but also of a rational feeding, and the result is already manifest in pigs which admittedly beat the Irish in a mounting Export, and in the command of prices much above those at which the American product sells. And this has been accomplished largely by the farmers' own co-operative efforts.

#### BUTTER.

There is an intimate connexion between Butter and Bacon. The butter-maker has a by-product—the separated milk—wherewith he may feed his young stock, and rear pigs at a minimum of expense. This is a point of economy which too often glances aside from the hard head of the British Farmer. He prefers—good easy man—to sell his milk whole, wherebŷ he gets no Cream for Butter, nor Milk for Cheese, nor separated milk for calves and pigs; but a big bill to pay for foodstuffs. He also gets a price for his milk which leaves a very unsatisfactory margin of profit, and in consequence he fills the air at the market ordinary with vehement remarks concerning hard times. No one doubts that times are hard; assuredly I do not. Nor (as my readers are aware) do I desire to cast the whole burden upon the Farmer. Still, it is impossible to shut one's eyes to the truth that, so far as Dairy Farmers are concerned, their devotion to Milk is certainly the cause of much of the trouble. Butter (to say nothing of Dairy-fed Bacon) is a much surer way of salvation. But what are the facts? The British Isles, superb in their Dairy capacities, are now the dumping-ground of Foreign Dairy Produce. And the evil is increasing.



*The Import Trade.*

Imports of Butter and Margarine\* into the United Kingdom.

Average '64-73.	Average '64-83.	Average '84-93.	'94.	'95.	'96.
cwts. 1,171,394	cwts. 1,910,832	cwts. 2,967,274	cwts. 3,684,160	cwts. 3,765,830	cwts. 3,963,881

Increased population does not account for this increased custom at Foreign Butter Shops. Thus :

Imported Butter and Margarine consumed in the United Kingdom per Head of the Population.

Average '64-73.	Average '74-83.	Average '84-93.	'94.	'95.	'96.
lbs. 4.3	lbs. 6.3	lbs. 9.0	lbs. 10.6	lbs. 10.6	lbs. 11.2

And this is where it comes from :

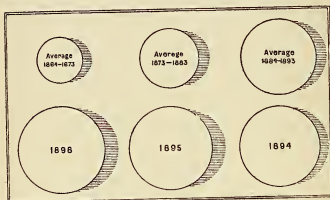
*Imports in 1896.*

BUTTER.			Cwts.
From Denmark	...	...	1,223,784
„ France	...	...	467,601
„ Sweden	...	...	323,329
„ Holland	...	...	234,469
„ United States	...	...	141,553
„ Germany	...	...	107,325
„ Other Countries	...	...	226,514
From Victoria	...	...	154,865
„ Canada	...	...	88,357
„ New Zealand	...	...	56,373
„ New South Wales	...	...	7,777
TOTAL CWTs.			<u>3,037,947</u>

\* I have included Margarine because, until '86, it was not separately denoted in the Board of Trade Returns.

MARGARINE.				Cwts.
From Holland	...	...	...	861,887
" France	...	...	...	30,523
" Norway	...	...	...	10,158
" Other Countries	...	...	...	23,366
TOTAL CWTs. ...				<u>925,934</u>

There are no statistics of Butter Production in Britain. The nearest approach to information lies in the number of cows which the country carries; but this is no guide, because our farmers are abandoning Butter-making for Milk-selling. But, in so far as the figures are any in-



DISCS SHOWING RELATIVE IMPORTS OF BUTTER AND MARGARINE.

dication of the state of the Dairy, here are some comparative statistics: The average number of cows in the United Kingdom in '76-80 was 3,724,000: it is now 4,000,000. Denmark in '71 fed 807,000 cows: she now supports about 1,000,000. The United States fed 9,000,000 head in '70: by '93 the number had increased to 16,500,000. A similar development is reported from Canada. I do not know the proportion which the cows in Australia bear to the rest of the cattle; but the total head is increasing at a tremendous rate. For example,

the Australian Colonies held 8,230,000 head in '86, and 11,872,000 in '91.\* Recent years have seen great improvements in Dairy processes, and other countries have taken full advantage of them to increase their output of Butter. But the British Dairy Farmer has stood aside, and has been shoved out of a growing market, as we have seen. So now you have a large London dealer calculating that, of all the Butter he sells, about 15 or 20 per cent. only comes from Ireland: the member of the United Kingdom which makes of Butter a speciality.†

Nor does foreign competition stop at edging out the home-made article: it also diminishes the price realized. Irish Butter (which once commanded the top price in the home market) is down beneath the Foreigner now, and in one year ('93-94) went down 1½d. because of foreign competition. In England the same tale is told. Yorkshire Butter makes 3d. a lb. less than Danish;‡ yet every shop in Leeds is half filled with Danish. The falls in the English article have been disastrous. During the Seventies prices ranged between 1s. 2d. and 1s. 10d. a lb.—sometimes more: the middle Nineties have seen them hovering between 10d. and 1s. 4d.—often less. The foreign stuff has held a more even way. To take a few examples: In '67 imported Butter commanded £5·13 a cwt.; in '77, £5·83; in '87, £5·29; in '95, £5·04. In some parts the Foreigner bids fair to drive the British Butter-Maker clean out of existence. A witness from the Border-Country prophesied to the Royal Commission on Agriculture that, unless the Import ceased (probably he only meant was substantially checked), the industry in his district would be destroyed; for it was forcing

\* See *Board of Trade Journal* for December, 1894, pp. 647-8.

† Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 448.

‡ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., pp. 403-5.

down home prices to the point at which profitable manufacture ceases. This witness, it may be added, admitted that English Butter was badly made, and so got placed as it deserved.\*

*Why Denmark Beats Us.*

As my tables show, our chief competitor is Denmark. That little country—her total area is less than an Eighth of ours, her cultivated area little more than a Ninth, her total population about an Eighteenth—has practically captured the English market, and has done it by the most resolute and praiseworthy efforts. Indeed, the English trade is almost the one item of importance in the Danish Dairy Farmer's purview. Not only does nearly all the Butter he exports (about 97 per cent.) come to this country, but most of what he makes is exported. For the wants of that small population are easily satisfied; more especially as in the bulk it displays a frugal preference for imported margarine. The Export of Butter has multiplied about ninefold within a generation!

It has been said that the most valuable part of the Danish Farmer's holding is the four inches at the top of his head. The epigram is a trifle solid, but the truth it sets forth is beyond controversy. The short explanation of the Dane's achievement may be put in Major Craigie's words: 'I think there is a combination of intelligence, education, Government assistance, and co-operation.'† Let us deal with the last item first. It is estimated that Denmark contains about 1,200 Co-operative Dairies. The central idea of the Danish Co-operative Dairy is that it should form in a sense the axis around which the

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 255.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 227.

Dairy-Farms of the neighbourhood revolve. That is to say, the Farmers of a certain district unite into a Society, and erect a Dairy, or Creamery, whereto they take their milk, or cream, and whereat they are paid for quality as well as quantity. The Butter is churned at the Creamery and sold therefrom, the profits going to the Farmers themselves. That, in brief, is the principle; but as it is so important a factor in the success of Danish Butter in the English market, it may be worth while to glance in a little more detail at the institution. Here is a *précis* of the articles of association of a typical Danish Dairy Society:

The object of a Co-operative Dairy Association is to erect a dairy, and to secure to members the highest possible profits on their cows, by separating the milk in centrifugal separators and manufacturing the cream into Butter for sale; part of the separated milk to be made into skim-milk cheese sufficient for the needs of members and the neighbourhood, the rest of the separated milk, with the butter milk and the whey, to be sold to members at a fair price. In this Association a member has as many votes as he has cows: subject to which qualification, the Society is framed on a democratic basis. A Dairyman is engaged at a small fixed salary (with free lodging and other perquisites), and is also paid on commission, and engages the necessary assistants. Milk is paid for according to the fat contents, and is weighed on its arrival at the Dairy. Provision is made for the preliminary devotion of profits to working expenses and the extinction of the debt incurred in original construction, and losses are borne by members in proportion to the quantity of milk they deliver. When the debt is paid off, the value of the Society's assets are apportioned as shares among the members in ratio to the quantity of milk they have delivered. Afterwards the yearly profits

are divided in such a way that, in the first place, 5 per cent. is paid on each share, when the remainder is distributed in proportion to the value of milk delivered by each member during the previous year. The Dairy undertakes the transport of milk from the farms, unless the quantity per day be less than 100 lbs., when the farmer has to bring his milk to the nearest highroad along which the Dairy cart runs. Members must keep their transport churns perfectly clean, and must look to it that the milking is properly done, that the milk is immediately passed through the strainer into the churns, and that the churns are placed in cold water, to be changed when necessary. It is forbidden to send to the Dairy milk from sick cows, or from cows until five days after calving; and these rules are maintained by fines. Exclusiveness is also ensured by forbidding members to sell Butter or Cheese, or to sell their milk to other dairies, though they may sell milk to peasants in the neighbourhood. The members have the privilege of buying Butter for private consumption at a price equivalent to the cost of production. Then stringent rules (the breaking of which is visited by substantial fines) are imposed upon members with respect to the feeding of their cows. Cabbage, turnip-tops, and kohlrabi-tops are absolutely forbidden. Other questionable foodstuffs may only be used when the Dairyman is notified thereof, so that special attention may be given to the quality of the milk delivered to him, and, if the butter's flavour be injured thereby, the Dairyman may refuse to receive more milk from cows so fed. The Directorate arranges for the purchase of feeding materials in bulk, as well as grass-seeds and plants, and delivers the same to members. To ensure a good aroma, members are bound to purchase as much rape-cake as shall furnish at least one pound daily to each cow during

the winter. The Directorate and the Dairyman have powers of visitation, and fines are inflicted for concealment or false information. For the preservation of the separated milk and the checking of infectious disease, this by-product is always heated at the dairy. If infectious disease break out in a member's family or stock, he must immediately cease to deliver milk until the disease has disappeared and his farm has been disinfected. So, too, in the event of sickness among the staff of the Dairy : the Dairyman must instantly remove the sick person and disinfect the premises, or be heavily fined.

My readers will now begin to understand why Danish Butter is uniformly good. I do but outline the skeleton of the splendid system by which the Dane is able to put Butter of excellent quality on the market. If space served, I might give details of the butter-making, the regulations for milking, and the like, which make the Danish Dairy a model for the world. But it is time to pass to other matters. For the Danish farmer is not left to work out his salvation alone. He has also the assistance of local Agricultural Associations, and (still more important) the aid of the Royal Agricultural Society and the State. The two last are so closely connected that they may be properly considered together. A conspicuous instance of combined action is their institution of Dairy Advisers and Experts. Three Consulting Experts have been appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, but they are under the control of the Agricultural Society. Their duty is to assist by advice any Dairy Association (or individual farmer) which may seek it, and the only charges are those for board and travelling expenses. 'These men,' said Captain Lacour, the head of the Danish Agricultural Department, 'are our Dairy Doctors.' When anything goes wrong in dairy or farm, they visit

the spot and advise how the mischief may be set right. In addition, these experts visit the stores of butter-merchants, and if they see any butter which is not as it should be, they write to the dairy whence it comes, and explain the trouble.\* The Government likewise keeps an expert in England, whose function is to promote the repute and sale of Danish produce. He is furnished with a comprehensive list of instructions; as, that he shall contradict in the Press any assertions affecting Danish agriculture and produce, that he shall look out for such fraudulent practices as are calculated to hurt the fame of Danish Butter, that he shall keep a watchful eye on markets. There is no doubt that the gentleman who at present fills this office does his work. But State Aid in Denmark does not end at his doorstep. Take the Government Butter Shows for instance. They last for months on end, and the exhibits are severely tested. It is provided that an intending exhibitor must, on receipt of a letter or telegram, at once send in a ready-made cask of butter. This prevents the preparation of a special cask, and ensures the exhibition of typical produce. Also the Government has made careful regulations with respect to the export of Margarine, being actively desirous that its country's good name and commercial prospects shall not be tarnished by any trafficking in that unholy compound; in Denmark the manufacture of Margarine is consequently on the decline, notwithstanding the large home consumption. Nearly all the Margarine consumed in Denmark is imported, while the export has become practically *nil*—the avowed export, that is; but analysts in England say they have detected Margarine in certain samples. It has been asserted that, beyond the matters I have mentioned, the Dairy Farmer receives no special aid

\* Report of Recess Committee, 1896, p. 154.



from his Government. But this is not true. The principal railways in Denmark are owned by the Government, and the Agricultural Industry is carefully considered in the matter of freight charges. The system extends to the minor railways and the steamships which convey Danish produce to this country.

This section would be incomplete without a reference to the improvements made in the distribution of Danish produce. Until about '80 Danish Butter was delivered to a local dealer, who disposed of it through a broker to the wholesale exporter. But with the steady growth of the English trade has come the elimination of the middleman. The producer now sells to the export merchant direct, who in his turn (he is appointed by the State) has succeeded in eluding the English Commission Agent, and deals directly with the English butter-merchant in this country. Our merchants wire their orders every Thursday to Denmark, and the butter is despatched next day, the price being fixed by a representative Committee in Copenhagen. This arrangement is generally advantageous: the English buyer is sure of the quantity he asks, while the Dane not only is sure that his Butter will not remain unsold, but also saves the Commission Agent's charge. Now, in the elimination of the middleman consists the secret, to no small extent, of profitable production. The British Farmer is slow to take this point.†

One other factor must be noted. Danish Butter is beautifully packed in metal (or other) receptacles, which ensure its presentable appearance in an English butter-shop. Now your English butterman likes to display his goods in the shop window in bulk; it is at once

\* Report of Recess Committee: Mr. T. P. Gill's Report, p. 163.

† Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III, Appendix, p. 504.

a striking advertisement and a substantial guarantee of the wholesale character of his business. The admirably packed and preserved Danish butter lends itself to this scheme. But the cask from Ireland, covered in dirt, as it often is, and comprising layers of various sorts, like geological deposits, must be carefully hidden from the purchaser's eye, lest his gorge rise, and his custom be transferred. So the butter-merchant naturally prefers the Danish article, whose seductive appearance is matched by its uniformly excellent flavour.

*Some other Countries.*

Denmark does not have it all her own way; her neighbour, Sweden, for one, holds a substantial and a growing position in the English Butter Market. In '90 that market was invaded by Swedish Butter to the tune of 224,235 cwts.; by '96 that quantity had increased to 323,829 cwts. The success of Sweden is even more remarkable than Denmark's. The climatic conditions are less favourable, the winters being so long that the cattle have to be stall-fed in all cases for the most of the year; while in many parts of the country, where there is no pasture, they are tied up in the sheds all the year round. This enforced stall-feeding adds considerably to the expenses of the Swedish dairy; yet the Swede is able to place his Butter in England. Mr. Gough, our Chargé d'Affaires at Stockholm, attributes the Swede's success to the 'skill, knowledge, and care which he brings to the conduct of his business.\* Mr. Anderson, of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, who undertook a special mission to investigate Swedish methods *sur place*, reported that the management was

\* Board of Agriculture's Report on Dairy Farming in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany (C. 7019).

'always more economical, and they were more attentive to details, such as cleanliness,' which, of course, is very important. In regard to small things they were far in advance of us. Then they adopt a more elaborate system of testing the milk, which would be quite useless to our creamery managers, who have had no scientific training in nine cases out of ten.\* In Sweden, also, Co-operation is coming into fashion, and, even where it has not yet been adopted, the Wholesale Butter-Making System is in vogue in the form of 'buying-up' dairies—factories, that is, run by capitalists, who buy the milk or cream from the farmers. Nor should the excellent system of Dairy Instruction which (thanks to State Aid) obtains in Sweden, as also in Norway, be left out of count. A leading feature is the sending round to the farmers of peripatetic experts, who give practical and theoretical instruction in butter-making.

France is more formidable still. Notwithstanding competition, the Norman and Breton dairies take the second place in the English market. In France, also, you have Co-operation in full swing, and accounting, in a measure, for success. In three neighbouring Departments (Charente-Inférieure, Deux-Sèvres, and Vendée) there is a group of about seventy co-operative creameries, federated for the most part by means of a Central Association. Serious aspersions have been cast upon the purity of Norman Butter, but the fact remains that it is bought by English buttermen who will scarce look at English or Irish. One reason is undoubtedly the admirable organization of the French distributive industry. Mr. Lovell, a big London provision merchant, told the Agricultural Commission something about the special facilities granted to the transport of Normandy butter:

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III., p. 386.

'It is never sent on to the railway until night. The trucks come into the place, the butter is put into the trucks, and then taken down to Cherbourg, and shipped at night, and kept out of the sun carefully there, and also on the steamer'\*—a variance from the Anglo-Irish practice, as I shall presently relate.

Our old friend, Germany, too, consigns butter, as she does everything else, to our hospitable ports, and Germany, like the rest, has apprehended the virtues of combination. So we record the existence in the Germany of '94 (I have no later figures) of 1,341 Agricultural Productive Societies, whereof 1,265 were Creameries. Nor must Holland be left out, for Friesland Butter, despite the severe competition of Denmark, still manages to hold its own; but as I shall deal more fully with Dutch dairy-farming when I come to speak of Cheese, I will but remark that in Holland, also, Co-operation and Cleanliness have play.

The United States should be watched. The early Nineties witnessed a diminished Export to this country; but the falling-off was more than corrected in '96, when we received a much larger consignment of United States Butter than in any previous year. When that country, with its vast capacities, takes to the development of an industry, it is time for all competitors to pull themselves together. 'Tis interesting to note that the development of American Butter for export is chiefly an affair of the Eastern States, whose Farmers have adopted this method of making good the loss on Wheat. Creameries (need it be said?) are the rule in American Dairying, and the number of Co-operative Dairies is increasing year by year.

A word, now, as to Colonial Butter. It is a far cry

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 444.

to the Antipodes, and Butter is scarcely the sort of thing one would imagine making an elegant survival of a journey across the Equator. Yet the Australian Colonies are addressing themselves energetically and successfully to the business of making Butter for the Foreign Bread consumed in the Mother Country. And, in truth, if England is determined at all hazards not to feed herself, it is better that the work and the profit of feeding her should go to the Colonies than to foreigners. Anyway, of the fact there is no doubt, and Denmark, in particular, is viewing with undisguised alarm the increasing shipments of Australian Butter. Victoria is the chief offender. To foster the infant Export, her Government did not hesitate to give the dangerous aid of an Export Bounty, to the substantial amount of 2d. in the lb. But this stimulus has now been withdrawn, there being obviously no further need for it. Here are some recent figures :

*Imports into the United Kingdom of Butter from Victoria.*

'90.	'91.	'92.	'93.	'94.	'95.	'96.
cwts. 8,708	cwts. 20,033	cwts. 47,592	cwts. 105,994	cwts. 190,398	cwts. 212,797	cwts. 154,862

It will be noticed that '96 saw a check—whether temporary or permanent I have no means of prophesying—and this check was shared to a still greater degree by New South Wales. But Canada was amply avenged for her Sisters' wrongs. She sent us 50,000 cwts. more in '96 than in '95, which in its turn was almost double the quantity sent in '94.

*The Apathetic Briton.*

I have said enough, I think, to show that Co-operation is a prime essential to success in the Modern Dairy. One is almost disposed to follow that up by declaring that therefore, and of course, Co-operation is laughed out of existence by the British Farmer. And certain it is that Co-operative Dairy-Farming is all but unknown in Great Britain. To the few exceptions in England and the more numerous evidences of a saner mind in Ireland I shall advert later. For the present let me pause to chronicle the apathy which up to now obtains in the vast majority of British Dairies, where conservative individualism of the most unprofitable and insensate kind holds undisputed sway. 'Tis a hard saying, but it is well within the truth. Indeed, 'apathetic' is inadequate to the case of many British Dairy-Farmers. Some, including pseudo-intelligent representatives of their class, who lift up the voice of sturdy independence at meetings of the Farmers' Club, and before Royal Commissions, are not content with indifference: they pour unstinted abuse on the idea of Co-operation. Here are one or two extracts from published utterances. At a meeting of the Farmers' Club a year ago, to which Mr. Rew read a stimulating paper on 'Co-operation in Agriculture,' a practical gentleman from Yorkshire delivered himself thus: 'Taking the three modes of co-operation, first of all co-operative production. I have written against that, and I think many of you will agree with me that it is, and is likely to be, a failure.' The next speaker, who hailed from Norfolk, warmly eulogized his Yorkshire friend's sturdy views: 'I quite agree with what Mr. Rowlandson said with regard to co-operative production, for I do not think that it is likely in any case to flourish. It has not done so in the past, when agricultural produce

was much more valuable than it is now, and I fear at this time and in the future we shall not see any good results in co-operative farming.' This gentleman was full of reasons why farmers should refrain from helping themselves. One is worth quoting: 'There is one other reason why farmers do not co-operate, and that is their poverty. If people are rich they can co-operate with the greatest possible advantage; but when people are very poor, as the farmers are at the present day, they must have cash for their corn, but if they buy their cake or manure they expect to buy it on credit. That being the case, it is very much against co-operation as I understand it.'\* This gentleman is doubtless an excellent farmer, but I fear he does not maintain the reputation of his profession for sound churchmanship, or he would have remembered the parable of the foolish one who uselessly buried his one talent because it was not ten. Why, the very basis of co-operation is individual poverty; it is just your Poor Farmer who needs to combine. The Danish Farmers were a poorer race than they of Norfolk, and that is why they banded themselves together; and that is also why they are beating the Norfolk men in their home-market, and are well on the road, in face of climatic and other drawbacks, to greater wealth than the Farmers of Norfolk enjoy. But I must refrain from criticism: for did not this same Norfolk Farmer tell the Club in another part of his speech that 'we do come in for such an enormous amount of abuse, as well as advice, that I am almost tired of reading it'? So he shall read no more of mine. But I must find room for an excerpt from Mr. J. K. Fowler, who followed the Norfolk speaker: 'When the Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Factory was formed at Aylesbury . . . I found that it took the milk of 3,500 cows daily, and paid a dividend

\* *Journal of Farmers' Club*, February, 1896.

to its shareholders of considerably over 20 per cent. on a return of £100,000. The late Duke of Buckingham offered to the farmers of the Vale of Aylesbury to build a factory on some land adjoining the new railway-station at Aylesbury if the farmers would send their milk to that factory, and give them the benefit of all the profits made by this company for themselves. Do you think we could get half-a-dozen together? No, not three. The other instance was still more remarkable. The late Mr. Allender . . . and I were determined to see if a Butter Factory could not be started in the centre of undoubtedly the best district in the world—for I think the Vale of Aylesbury Butter has never been equalled. We took a large part of the new Corn Exchange at a rent of £75 a year, and Mr. Allender offered to fit it up with the very best machinery that ingenuity and modern appliances could effect. A meeting was attempted to be held of the farmers of the district, with a view of getting them to send their butter to the factory, and so reap the benefits obtained by the Normandy people and the Danes; but we could not get half a dozen farmers to agree to send their butter to that factory.'

Certain other spokesmen of Unprogressive Agriculture do not go the length of scorning the notion of Co-operation: they are content to testify their disbelief in its practicability. Of such was a witness before the Royal Commission, who said that in his district (Cornwall): 'the number of cows kept within a given area would not be sufficient to render that a profitable way of conducting this business. You would require about 600 cows in flush milk, within an area of about four miles, and we should not have that number or anything like it. As a rule, a farmer would keep from ten to twelve cows, and market their produce himself to better advantage.'

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III, p. 122.



This witness omitted from his consideration the possibility of auxiliary creameries in scattered districts: had he enquired into Danish methods he would have found them actually an institution in profitable working order. But the best answer to his pessimism lies in the actual and successful existence of three Dairy Co-operative Societies in Cornwall to-day.

The apathy of the British Farmer is especially maddening to those of us who advocate State Assistance for Agriculture. We are constantly having his stupidity thrown in our teeth when we advocate needful measures of Protection; and the uphill struggle against Cobdenite prejudice is not lightened by having to sit silent under the retort: 'What is the good of trying to help men who will not help themselves?' We may—and we should—allow something for the hopelessness engendered by the transference of taxation from the successful Foreign Importer to the unsuccessful Home Producer; but, having made this allowance, there still remains enough gratuitous and obstinate inertia to spoil the temper of the most benignant among the well-wishers to British Agriculture.

#### *The Regeneration of Ireland.*

All men concerned in the handling of Butter are unanimous as to this: that the supreme requirement is Uniformity. Many qualities are important; this one is vital. The big dealers insist on it; the public resents its absence; the producers (even those of the United Kingdom) admit that it is needed; exporters to the said United Kingdom make it their leading characteristic; yet the distinction of Irish Butter has been the lack of it. Irish farmers and their friends have urged that the best Irish Butter cannot be beaten; but the English market will have none of a commodity which couples the chance of an occasional pound of the very best with the certainty

of many pounds of the very worst, when other nations are pouring their golden streams of uniform excellence into the English market. So has Ireland inflicted upon herself another injustice. That some Irish Butter should be very bad is not surprising. Listen, for instance, to the evidence (before the Royal Commission on Agriculture) of Mr. R. A. Anderson, the indefatigable Secretary of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society\* :—‘ I have seen milk put for the cream to rise under the bed which was occupied by the whole family, where there was only one room for the family to live in, where the pig was in one corner, the cow in another, and the bed with the milk under it in another.’ I shall add no comment to the revelation, only expressing the pious hope that this instance of rural simplicity is abnormal, even in congested districts. But where the dairy arrangements are more elegant in design and effect, it is obvious that the individualistic methods which have ruled all over Ireland, and still obtain over far the greater part of it, must result in varying qualities.

Happily the old, bad conditions are changing; and when they are changed, the credit will be due to Messrs. Horace Plunkett and Anderson, and to the band of practical reformers they have gathered round them. Their watchword is Co-operation. The Irish Agricultural Organization Society (of which Mr. Plunkett is president and Mr. Anderson secretary) believes that many things are necessary to bring Irish Dairy Farming into a flourishing condition, but it is firmly convinced that of all these the one of supreme importance is the supersession of individualistic methods by Co-operation, which, as practised by Ireland’s rivals, has brought the Irish Industry to the sorest straits. Only by Co-operation can

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III., p. 393.

Uniformity be assured ; and if Co-operation did nothing else, it would go very far indeed towards rehabilitating the good name of Irish Butter. But it must do a very great deal more : it must open the market to the Irish Farmer, and, by virtue of the economies in butter-making which it effects, it must ensure him very much larger profits.

It was about '89 that Mr. Plunkett began his work. At that time there was but one Co-operative Dairy Society in Ireland. It had been started at Drumcollogher, in County Limerick, by some members of the English Co-operative Wholesale Society and by Mr. Gray, Secretary of the Co-operative Union. Many of its features resemble those of the Danish Societies and of the Irish Societies since established ; but there were points of difference, and of these some bred disaster, though at first the Society did very well. The chief mistake was the paying for milk according to quantity ; for in this way came adulteration by the less honest members, and then the more honest, finding their good milk brought them no more than the poorer sort, proceeded to 'Simpsonise' it also. Thus, when Mr. Taylor, Q.C., went down to hold an enquiry, he found, among other irregularities, that the Dairy had been buying nearly as much water as milk, and that it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Lastly, the Organization Society got to work upon it, and it is now, I understand, flourishing like the other Co-operative Dairies since started under that Society's auspices. These Associations have multiplied in the most encouraging way. According to my latest advices from Mr. Anderson, there are registered in Ireland some eighty-five Co-operative Dairies, besides forty Agricultural Co-operative Societies, and three Agricultural Banks—all working most successfully. This happy advance is not wonderful. The Co-operating Farmer gets at least a

penny a gallon more for his milk than his Non-Co-operating neighbour. In a valuable leaflet (scattered broadcast over Ireland) the Organization Society points out how this saving is effected. For the past few seasons, it tells the Farmers, they have only realized an average price of less than ninepence a pound for Home-made Butter. Under the individual dairy system three gallons of milk are used in the manufacture of that pound; of necessity they get less than threepence per gallon for their milk. But the average price per gallon paid by the Co-operative Dairies has varied between a little over threepence halfpenny and a little over fourpence. The leaflet says that about fourpence is the average price of the last four years; but as the price was down somewhat in '94 and '95, let me put the figure at threepence three farthings. Now, three farthings a gallon is so substantial a difference when it is multiplied by the yearly yield of the cows and number of cows kept, as to go far towards making the difference between poverty and prosperity. On the Society's computation of fourpence per gallon, and taking 450 gallons as the season's yield of an ordinary Irish cow, you find a yearly return per cow of £7 10s. against the £5 12s. 6d. of the farmers who skim and churn at home. With the centrifugal separator the Co-operative Creamery can make a pound of butter out of two and a half gallons of milk against the home-maker's three, and so can easily afford to pay a better price for its milk, at the same time that it gets one for its Butter. In '94, for example, the average price per pound of Farmers' Butter in Ireland was barely 8d., but the average price of Creamery ditto was 10·22d.; which excess, remember, is not captured by merchants or outside companies, but goes into the Co-operating Farmer's own pocket. Surely this point might be expected to penetrate even the scornful

scepticism of those members of the Farmers' Club from whom I have quoted. And if they would examine the constitution of the Irish Co-operative Dairy Societies, they would find that the plea of poverty under which they cloak their lethargy is blown to the four winds. For, as in the case of Denmark, these Irish Societies are so arranged that no Farmer can be too poor to join. You are only required to take a pound share in the Creamery; the greater part of that you can pay in milk, by consenting to a reduction of a penny a gallon in the price paid you for your milk, or by allowing a certain quantity of milk to remain unpaid for till the share is paid up. Nor are you limited to a single share. Indeed, as is obvious, some farmers must of necessity become extensive shareholders, for a Creamery costs somewhere between seven and eight hundred pounds.\* The custom is for each Farmer to take as many shares as he feels he can afford. In doing this he is wise, for the dividends are substantial. The returns for '95 show that on a total paid-up share capital (in thirty-eight Creameries) of £19,067 there was a net profit of £2,794 (or an average of 14·7 per cent.) after setting aside from the gross profits a sum of £2,418 for depreciation. Nor was this an exceptional rate. The price per pound of butter averaged 10·14d., which was lower than in the previous years, that in '93 being 11·55d. To this comfortable rate of profit add the increased price which the Farmer gets for his milk at the Creamery and the other substantial advantages with which that Creamery provides him: the collection and sale of his eggs and poultry, the purchase, at wholesale prices and in the best markets, of his coal, his seeds, his feeding stuffs, his artificial

\* This Mr. Anderson, in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture, estimated would provide a Creamery for a district 1,000 cows strong.

manures, his farm implements and machinery; and the furnishing of bulls, stallions, and boars for the improvement of stock. Nor must you leave out of the reckoning the distributing agency which the Creameries have established in Great Britain. Truly, the Irish Dairy Farmers who neglect the Organization Society's offer of assistance in the starting of Co-operative Creameries in their districts are casting out the most important and the most necessary means of salvation within their reach.

The manner of dividing the profits is as follows: Five per cent. is allotted as a first charge on the paid-up share capital. Then ten per cent. of the remaining net profit is given to the workers in the Dairy—the Manager, the Dairymaids, etc.—in proportion to their wages. It is not given to them in cash, but in shares; it is paid, however, in cash in case they leave, or get into bad health or other trouble. This system stimulates competition for employment, and has a good effect on the quality of the work. The remaining profit is divided among the purveyors of Milk in proportion to the value of what they have sent in during the year; but those purveyors who are not members receive only at half-rate, and the amount is kept back until it has attained the worth of five shares, which are allotted to the Farmer, and the Farmer is declared a member. This method has been deemed advisable because of the importance of getting the purveyors to become members of the Society: otherwise they have not the same interest in its success, and business suffers thereby.\*

And here a word respecting Co-operation from the consumer's standpoint. I have shown that the Co-operative Dairies get a higher price for their Butter than

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III, pp. 386-7.

the Home ones ; but a Co-operative Dairy must not be regarded as an institution for the inflation of prices. Home and Foreign competition may be trusted to prevent this. Such Dairies are not in the nature of rings ; their main purpose is to profit the Farmer by effecting economies in butter-making. They also turn out Butter of a better uniform quality than the Home Dairies, which is, therefore, worth more money, and commands a better price in the market. When Co-operation is spread all over the country, we may expect that price to drop : when the net result will be that Irish Butter will remain at something like its present price ; that it will be much better in quality, and that Irish Dairy Farmers will be much more prosperous than of yore. Yet another influence in regeneration is the system of Dairy Education established of late in Ireland. Its most important expression is the Munster Dairy School. Its teaching is rather theoretical, but it is very valuable nevertheless. With it must be coupled the Agricultural and Dairy School at Glasnevin.

*What Great Britain is Doing.*

It is contrary to accepted views to chronicle backwardness in England and Scotland as compared to Ireland. Yet it is undoubtedly true that in the matter of a progressive Dairy Ireland is ahead of Great Britain. Co-operation is in its infancy across St. George's Channel ; it is merely embryonic on the hither side. England is still in bondage to the great, mistaken, misapplied, misunderstood principle of self-reliance. The English Farmer is as yet blind to the fact that Association is often the sole road to individual prosperity. He has not yet been brought to see that Co-operative Production and Sale are no less useful to his finances, and are not more subversive of his dignity, than association for insurance against fire.

He is also, as I have remarked, in bondage to Milk ; not realizing that consumers need Butter as well as Milk, and that the Butter Supply of England, which is enriching the rest of the world, might, if the manufacture and distribution were properly conducted, be a source of revenue to himself. Yet he has plenty of object-lessons. The Factory System is in existence in this country, and in the matter of profits Dairy Supply Companies compare most favourably with the great majority of urban industries. Indeed, were it not for these Dairy Companies, English Butter-making would be in even worse case than it is : at least they are doing something to keep the industry alive and to put back the Foreigner's advance. Yet they bring no profits to the Agriculturist properly so-called. True, they buy his milk, and so secure him a market ; but like all profit-making concerns, they are careful to pay as low a price as possible for raw material ; while the profits on the manufacture go into the pockets of shareholders, who are ordinary capitalists. What is wanted is, not a factory run by a joint-stock company, but a Co-operative Association of Farmers. And until we have such Co-operation by all means let us have the outside factory system ; at least it shows the possibilities which await the English Butter-maker. It shows how the great need for Uniformity may be supplied, and how to get a better price (threepence a pound more is the experience of at least one factory\*). The system is also apparently advantageous to labourers in the district. And, if it do nothing else, it will help to rehabilitate the reputation of English Butter in the English Market ; an achievement which the experience of London Butter merchants shows to be far from superfluous. And in this way the struggle with Danes and Frenchmen for re-

\* Lord Vernon's factory at Sudbury, in Derbyshire. See Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III., p. 61.



entry into the Home Market will be simplified when the English Farmer makes up his mind seriously to contest the position.

Now let me further relieve the normal gloom of my page by directing your attention briefly to the light which is breaking on the British Dairy industry : to the beginnings, that is to say, of Co-operation. Here, as in Ireland, history must ascribe the happy change to one devoted man. To the Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham belongs the credit of moving a heavy-sterned and apathetic industry. Mainly to him is due the credit of founding the British Produce Supply Association, Limited, in Long Acre, and, still better, that of establishing the Sleaford and Midsomer Norton District Produce Supply Associations, in which Societies are to be found the beginning of Co-operation in English rural industry. I need not recite the rules and constitution of these bodies : it will suffice to say that they expound the principle of Co-operation. It is made possible, that is, for every Farmer in the neighbourhood to join (in the case of the Midsomer Norton Society each member holds five £1 shares for every hundred acres in his occupation); the object is the prosecution of wholesale and retail dealings in British Farm and Garden Produce, the manufacture of Dairy Produce, and the dealing in Live and Dead Stock, etc., and the profits are divided among members. And Farmers and Country Gentlemen who desire the prosperity of our greatest industry can undertake no better work than that of establishing such associations in their own neighbourhood.

*State Aid.*

Thus far I have limited your attention to Self-Help ; and undoubtedly Dairy Farming, in contrast with Wheat Farming, depends for its betterment more largely upon

the Farmer's own exertions than upon State Aid. But State Aid also is needed. And by other Governments State Aid in various forms is given to encourage and supplement individual effort; generous grants towards the provision of Dairy Instruction, the indirect bounty of subsidized transport—even sometimes the direct bounty of an export bonus—all these are common. Our own Government must bestir itself. It does not necessarily follow that it should give the same kinds of aid as are given by foreign States. It may well follow their example in the matter of Technical Instruction. But it has no need to encourage the Export Trade: its energies can be fully occupied in the protection of the Home Market; and I fail to see why this protection cannot be that protection with a capital P which is a nightmare with all good Cobdenites. For English Butter is at present driven out of the market by the Foreign Article, though the Foreign Article commands a better price. Co-operation, with resultant Uniformity, would raise the status of the Home-Product, when Foreign Butter would at once come down in price in order to hold its own; so that, notwithstanding all the good which improved methods would work, it is still doubtful whether that good would suffice to kill the Foreign Trade. Our Competitors are better off than we in the matter of Taxation and Freights; and these advantages would enable them to cut prices to an extent which would hamper English and Irish farmers very seriously, even if it did not destroy their chance of capturing the British Market. Moreover, the Foreigner holds the field; for all practical purposes British Dairying is as an infant industry; and the experience of our successful rivals—Germany and the United States, for example—conclusively shows that an infant industry, which is to grow—if it is to grow at all—at the expense of a firmly-established Foreigner,

needs the help of a Protective Tariff. Most certainly the British and Irish Dairy industry is in present need of this help.

*The Trickery of the Foreigner.*

But, short of a fiscal revolution, there is still work for the State to do. Even if the Government is not allowed to put a tariff check on Foreign Butter, it may yet be called upon to deal with foreign trickery and fraud. For, alas! my encomiums on the uniform excellence of the Foreign Article need qualification. They can send us good Butter when they like, and in the main they do like; but many Continental factories prefer to justify their compatriots' reputation among Englishmen as purveyors of the cheap and nasty. Their produce is a judicious mixture of Butter and Margarine; but they label it 'Pure Butter' notwithstanding. The fact of such adulteration was long a matter of speculation; but the methods of the Public Analyst have demonstrated it beyond a doubt. In '95 the Board of Agriculture requested the Board of Customs to instruct their analysts to test Imported Butters: and between the 5th of May, '95, and the 29th of February, '96, eight hundred and ninety samples came under examination, one hundred and six of which were declared to be adulterated. The worst offenders were the Dutch and the Germans. Out of two hundred and twenty samples from Holland, fifty-four were adulterated; out of one hundred and twenty-four from Germany, thirty-seven, so confirming the suspicions which for some time past had been gathering round the operations of the Hamburg Butter Factories. Russia is also on the black list; thirty-four samples were taken from her imports: five were adulterated. Even Denmark, despite the laudable efforts of her Government, was caught in the act; though her offence was not

proportionally very great; for out of one hundred and seventy-eight samples, only eight were found to be wrong (one of these the Danish authorities declared to be of Finnish origin, though it came from a Danish port).\* The other offender was Norway, two of whose samples out of twenty-one failed to pass the test. The reputation of the other importing countries remained untarnished. Sweden's eighty-three samples, the United States' fifty-one, France's sixty, Belgium's five, and Argentina's four, all came victorious through the ordeal. And it is especially pleasing to note that our Colonies were proved honest, though Canada was subjected to thirty-nine tests, Australia to fifty-three, and New Zealand to eighteen. It does not absolutely follow that the countries which satisfied the analysts are altogether unimpeachable: all that was proved is that certain particular samples tested were right. It may seem ungracious to say this, but in the case of one country, at any rate, other investigations have had a less satisfactory issue. France has been roundly charged with practising the vice, not only by Englishmen, but by a Frenchman. M. Guillemain, who was Chairman of the Commission in charge of the last French Margarine Bill, declared in the House of Deputies that Normandy and Brittany Butter was sent to England containing fifteen to thirty-five per cent. of Margarine.† Professor Long told the Food-Products Adulteration Committee that he visited a factory in the Department of Calvados, and found that Margarine was being blended with Butter for the English market; and he produced a label from this factory which showed that the mixture was exported as 'Guaranteed Pure Butter.' The worthy *entrepreneur* (who had risen from the proletariat to the

\* See note at end of this chapter.

† Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '94, p. 101.

ownership of a big factory) had been repeatedly fined by his unappreciative compatriots. Professor Long also visited, as guest of the French Dairy Farmers' Association, another establishment, whose owner entertained him with great hospitality, but forbade him to enter the factory: it is gratifying to learn that he has since enjoyed the hospitality of a French gaol.\* In this connexion the evidence of another witness reads curiously. Colonel Curtis Hayward said that he took some of his own Butter for sale to one of the biggest West End shops. The shopkeeper told him that, if he bought it, he would have to give it away, for none of his customers would touch it: they would eat nothing but Brittany Butter.† Professor Long told a good story about the Hamburg Butter. A certain exporter (name kindly suppressed by the publishers of the Evidence) sent out a circular, wherein he lamented that Butter was exporting from Hamburg to England with an admixture of Margarine; he pointed out that the sole remedy was for buyers to require an absolute guarantee of purity; and 'My Butters,' he said, 'are warranted to be always pure, and this has several times been confirmed by analysis in England; further, a guarantee that the butter sold by me is free from oils, chemicals, and foreign fats appears on every invoice.' Professor Long had just before submitted a sample of this upright burgess's wares to two English analysts, who found it to contain but seventy-four per cent. of butter-fat.‡

It may be interesting to quote Professor Long's description of how the trick is worked: 'They have a very large table, some five and a half feet in diameter. . . .

\* Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '94, p. 101.

† *Ibid.*, p. 102.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Having provided the butter, which is graded, the Margarine is mixed in weighed quantities and placed upon the butter-table; the two articles are blended together by the rollers, and simultaneously with the blending a small tank at the bottom of the machine, filled with colouring matter and salt and water, is distributing through some revolving pipes the mixture over the butter and the Margarine; so that simultaneously, as the machine is being worked with the pure Butter, the Margarine, the brine, and the colouring matter are all being blended together, and in the end the mixture is such that you could not detect it.\* Now, Margarine can be bought as low as fourpence a pound, and the process of 'blending' is quite inexpensive; so the factor who mixes twenty-five per cent. of Margarine with his Butter is able so to cut his prices as to crowd out the honest producer.

It would, however, be unjust to the Foreigner to put the whole fraud upon him: the British shopkeeper is not always immaculate. In certain shops a marble screen may be noted upon the counter, and behind that screen a customer's purchase of 'Butter' is made up. In the left-hand corner is a large lump; in the right-hand corner another. And one lump is Butter, and the other is Margarine. And a blend is made in proportion as the customer is gullible. A child or an old woman would get more Margarine, a warier buyer get less; a suspicious-looking character (who might be an Inspector in disguise) would get pure Butter.† Thus (so at least Professor Long avers) does the British Shopkeeper aid the British Dairy-Farmer, and give satisfaction to the British Consumer. Nor is the Home Producer, when he

\* Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '94, p. 102.

† *Ibid.*, p. 106.

owns a factory, altogether above suspicion. Some two or three years ago the South of Ireland Butter-Makers' Association called the attention of the Limerick Corporation to the disquieting fact that many tons of Margarine were imported into Limerick. Now, Limerick is a headquarters of Irish Butter.\*

Sometimes the fraud is yet more flagrant. Certain importers do not boggle at importing their Margarine pure, without any sentimental consideration for customers; and their business is facilitated by the import of the Margarine in wicker baskets with tin labels, which are removed as soon as the Customs Officers are out of sight.†

*The Remedy.*

At present this fraudulent Import is practically unchecked. The Merchandise Marks Act is held to cover the case, but the Board of Customs does not regard this matter as having been quite within the purview of the Legislature when the Act was passed; it declines to institute a prosecution, except on outside information; and even then it requires the informer to deposit an amount equal to double the value of the detained and incriminated consignment, as security for indemnifying the Customs against loss in case the prosecution fail. It is not surprising to find that only two prosecutions are on record. One is worth recalling. The consignment consisted of twenty-nine cases from Ostend. Ten samples were taken from them by the Customs Analyst; all were found to be adulterated, and nine to contain not less than 30 per cent. of foreign fats.‡

The most practical remedy seems to be that put forward by Mr. Follett, the solicitor to the Board of

\* Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '94, p. 100.

† *Ibid.*, '96, p. 110.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Customs. He suggests that official analysts should continue to test samples, and that when they find adulteration they should detain the exporter's next consignment, and if it, too, proved adulterated, then a prosecution should ensue. The House of Commons' Committee, in its Report on this Evidence, agreed with Mr. Follett to the extent of regularly instructing analysts to test samples, but (unfortunately, I think) halted at the rest of his suggestion, on the ground that the detention of a large consignment would hamper trade, and possibly in some cases inflict injustice. But surely the more that sort of trade is hampered the better, and the very small injustice which might be inflicted, should the second consignment prove pure after it had been detained too long for consumption, can scarcely weigh against the general justice of the measure, and might easily be met by compensation. Another objection was urged by Mr. Primrose, Chairman of the Board of Customs. He said that a proper system of analysis would increase the cost of Imported Butter.\* This seems a dubious argument; the system would benefit the Home-Producer, nor would the Honest Foreigner have much cause to grumble. He must get his own Government to make and enforce so stringent laws against the export of adulterated stuff that England will not find it necessary thus to protect herself.

Our law would want amending. Under the present Acts a Customs entry may be amended within twenty-one days of the original entry. This is a generally necessary provision. A rough entry as to the nature of a cargo has to be made when the ship arrives in port, and this entry is likely to be inaccurate in some of its details; hence the permission to correct after time

\* Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '96, p. 52.



enough for a detailed examination of the cargo. But this permission opens a door for the fraudulent. If, the first entry made, it is proved to the consignee that his Butter has not the purity he claims for it, he can amend the entry and so save himself from prosecution. Hence the need for explanatory legislation. It would also be desirable that Parliament should so amend the Merchandise Marks Act that the Board of Customs would no longer deem the instituting of prosecutions a matter beyond its province.

#### CHEESE.

Like every other commodity subjected to Foreign Competition, Cheese has gone down in price. In some districts the fall has been very considerable: 60s. per cwt. being now given for Cheese which twenty years ago or so would have fetched 80s. There are, however, many differences in different parts of the country, and no statistics are available; but (to judge as nearly as one can from scattered evidence) it is safe to say that since Agricultural Depression settled down at the close of the Seventies, there has been an average fall of 10 per cent. Yet, even so, it is averred by practical men that Cheese-Makers are at present the most prosperous of British Agriculturists. In the light of this information, it is pertinent to record that in '96 we imported 2,244,535 cwts. of Cheese, while the Home Product exported amounted only to 10,347 cwts. These figures go very far to explain the fall in price; they are also a mordant commentary on the statement as to the comparative profitability of Cheese-making. A further gloss may be found in Mr. Anderson's confession with respect to Cheese in Ireland: 'A very little instruction was given in one or two cases, but it came to nothing. There are times in the year when Cheese might be very profitably

made, times when butter is low . . . but we do not know how to do it. We do not know anything about it, and have no way of getting the information.\* It may also be noted in the same connexion that Leicestershire, home of Stilton and the flat Leicestershire, a county which has been saved the full impact of the Depression by its Cheese industry, is now decreasing its output, and taking instead to that broad road of milk-selling which leads to agricultural destruction. That the easy game of selling Milk instead of working it has its drawbacks and dangers, Leicestershire Dairy Farmers have been recently warned by the very large reductions in price which Milk Buyers have forced on them.

*Our Import.*

To get a completer view of what our Agriculturists lose by not supplying their country's requirements, let me tabulate a few figures. First, as to the growth of the Import:—

*Imports of Cheeset into the United Kingdom.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
cwts. 770,942	cwts. 1,348,805	cwts. 1,819,078	cwts. 1,908,274	cwts. 2,150,312	cwts. 2,244,535

And here is the consumption per head of imported Cheese in the United Kingdom:—

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
lbs. 2·9	lbs. 4·7	lbs. 5·7	lbs. 5·8	lbs. 6·3	lbs. 6·4

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III., p. 391.

† Does not include artificial cheese.

From this you will see that the mischief began early; that in the decade from '76 to '86 it showed signs of approaching a climax; but that since then it has gained still further ground, though not at such a pace as in earlier years, nor at the pace which other Dairy Products have set in recent times. Still, there is no ground for the chastened optimism existing in certain quarters, and based on the assertion that the increase in Imported Cheese has practically stopped. The earlier development is no excuse for the folding of hands; for the tide shows no signs of turning, but, on the contrary, creeps steadily higher.

Below is a table showing whence the Import comes :—

*Imports of Cheese into the United Kingdom in 1896.*

	cwts.
From Canada ... ..	1,234,297
" United States ... ..	581,187
" Holland ... ..	292,988
" Australasia ... ..	55,149
" France ... ..	45,676
" Other Countries and British Possessions	35,238
<b>TOTAL</b> ... ..	<u>2,244,535</u>

The total paid for this mammoth import was £4,900,428, a large part, at any rate, of which might have gone into the pockets of British and Irish agriculturists.

The fact that Canada heads the list mitigates the distastefulness of these figures. True, we cannot, even for the sake of promoting Colonial Trade, consider the blight of a Home-Industry with pleasure, the more especially as the Daughter States are at present pretty well able to look after themselves. One may, however, put these Colonial imports in a separate category from the rest. If British Agriculture were free of the Foreign Competition, and as flourishing as it is now desperate, it is more than likely, particularly having regard to its Manufacturing

Interests, that England would require a certain amount of imported food, and this should be supplied—as undoubtedly it could easily be supplied—from our own Possessions. But, waiving Colonial Cheese, we have, on the '96 figures, 955,089 cwts., valued at £2,195,648, which we receive from foreign countries, and which we receive needlessly (the most valuable cheeses, you will note, are Foreign). For even those varieties which are associated with special districts on the Continent, and are, for the most part, indigenous thereto, would bear transplanting to our own Dairy Districts. Professor Long, whose name is one to conjure with in these matters, is convinced that the various cream and other cheeses of French name and habitat might easily be made in this country. And certainly we have no need of the huge American import; it carries with it no recommendation of special and original quality; it consists merely of imitation English and Continental Cheese. The only American variety that I know as 'racy of the soil' is the 'Filled-Cheese' hailing from Chicago; but, as tallow is not usually deemed a constituent part of Cheese, its originality is sufficient to take it out of the Cheese category altogether. This our statisticians do, and the product does not appear (designedly, at any rate) in the Import quoted. The United States Cheese, though often an imitation of genuine Cheddar or Cheshire, sufficiently colourable to deceive all except the expert, does not bear so good a reputation among dealers as does the Canadian—another point in favour of the Colonies. The success of both the Canadian and the United States products is undoubtedly due in the main to the universal Factory System, combined with low sea and rail freights: also to the fact that cheese is carried from New York to London at a freight which is somewhere about 50 per cent. lower than the genuine article from Cheshire pays

to make the journey from that county to London. With regard to Canadian Cheese, Englishmen would do well to remember that the manufacturers go to work in a very thorough and scientific manner: they are extremely particular in the application of tests to the milk, and jealously discard any that is inferior. There, too (I cannot too often call attention to the fact), the Factories are run on the Co-operative plan: 'every man who supplies milk,' as Mr. J. C. Lovell pointed out to the Royal Agricultural Commission, 'is a partner in the concern.'<sup>\*</sup> English producers should take note of the growing excellence of Canadian Cheese. The best Cheddar is still a more finely-flavoured article than the best Canadian Cheddar; but the real Cheddar is not always at its best; while the Canadian maintains a uniformly high second-rate excellence. And in commerce that means much. We are getting near the point where the English reputation is, in comparison with the Canadian product, little more than a reputation.

*The Competing Dutchman.*

But for details let us look nearer home. Holland, though one of the smallest countries in the world, is third on our list of Exporters. She carries 900,000 milch-cows: practically, her whole Export comes to us. In Holland, the Factory System is almost universal. In some cases, the Factory is owned by a joint-stock company, whose shareholders are usually farmers of the district; and in these cases the Milk is bought and paid for direct, the company taking the risk of manufacture and sale. But the genuine Co-operative system also exists; and there are forty-five Co-operative Societies for the manufacture of Butter and Cheese working, and with much success, in

<sup>\*</sup> Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 445.

Holland.\* I need not occupy your time with discussing details, as the system, in its main features, resembles the system afoot in Denmark; but I may mention one or two aids to prosperity which the Dutchman enjoys in a greater measure than the Farmers of other lands. One is Transport. Holland is a veritable network of canals and light railways, and the factories are usually built in close proximity to one, or both, of these means of transport. The Railway Tariff is very low, a Dutch Farmer being able to send from Groningen to London for less than a Tipperary Farmer can send to Dublin.† Then the Dutchman makes his land carry plenty of stock, forty or fifty milkers being frequently fed on a hundred-acre farm, and that is a proportion much in excess of even the best Dairy Districts in England.‡ Another distinguishing feature of the Dutch Dairy is the careful attention to cleanliness and the like, regarded as unimportant by too many English Farmers. To such a length does the Dutchman carry his devotion to cleanliness that he will often slip off his sabots outside his byre, so that Mr. M. G. Mulhall, in his Report to the Irish Recess Committee, compares these byres to ball-rooms, so elegant are the arrangements.§ The Dutchmen are also careful to stock their farms with prolific milkers. One Dutch milch cow produces an average value of £15 a year in Milk, Butter, and Cheese—50 per cent., that is, more than the English cow.|| Here we light on another instance of State Aid. In some districts the Government keeps bulls for the Farmer's use. When it does not, the

\* Recess Committee's Report, p. 243.

† *Ibid.*, p. 245.

‡ See article in *Nineteenth Century* for November, '96, by Messrs. H. Herbert Smith and Ernest C. Treppin.

§ But then it is pointed out by others that the Dutch farmer, his family, and his hands, habitually sleep in the cowhouse.

|| Recess Committee's Report, p. 243.

Farmers co-operate in its stead. In this matter of breeding, the English Dairy Farmer has much to learn from the Dutch: the Englishman often fails to differentiate between beef and milk. But, I suppose, English farmers would retort (*vide* their published utterances) that to this end, as to others, they are too poor to co-operate.

### *Suggestions.*

Very much of what I have written concerning Butter applies also to Cheese; I need do no more, therefore, than briefly note some suggestions for putting our Manufacture on a sounder footing. (1) Foreign Cheese should be marked. At present Cheeses come across the Atlantic with stencil brands, but these are sometimes rubbed or scraped off by the importer on arrival at Liverpool, and, according to Professor Long's information, the Importer actually charges for the process.\* (2) The Merchandise Marks Act should be so adjusted as to enforce the imposition deep enough to prevent deletion of the country-of-origin stamp upon all imported Cheeses (it can be done without injuring the article). (3) In the interests of the Home Producer (and of the Honest Importer) adulteration should be dealt with by Parliament. 'Filled-Cheeses' are not peculiar to Chicago. Mr. Elliott, of the Board of Agriculture, told the Food-Products Adulteration Committee that the analysts employed by the Customs Department tested five consignments of European Cheese and found one to contain 33 per cent. of foreign fat; it came from Rotterdam.† Evidently, then, Cheese must be included with Butter in whatever amend-

\* Select Committee on Food-Products Adulteration, Minutes of Evidence, '94, p. 147.

† *Ibid.*, '96, pp. 97, 98.

ments of the law are needed to check the adulterating foreigner. (4) The State should also encourage the Home Manufacture by levying a tariff on Foreign Cheese. This is necessary for real freedom of trade; for only by the imposition of a duty can the heavily-taxed Home Producer be put upon an equal footing in the market with the American, whose taxes are almost nominal. Moreover, a Protective Tariff on Foreign Cheese is also eminently desirable for the purpose of nursing into life the manufacture of those special kinds which are at present the monopoly of Europe. (5) Cheaper railway rates should be secured. (6) Lastly, the State should extend its system of grants to Dairy Associations for the provision of experts in Cheese Making. It has already, through the Board of Agriculture, given some assistance of this kind, and good results are reported from the expert's visits to divers farms in the south of Scotland.

Thus State aided, the Farmer could fairly be called upon to buckle to in earnest; and, if he failed to profit by the position, he would have no one but himself to blame for letting a lucrative industry get entirely into foreign hands. But, as in the case of Butter, *he must cease from making at home, if he would win the market.* Economy in production and uniformity in the product demand Co-operation. There may be exceptions to this rule. Here and there there may be Farmers capable of producing that highest make which is said to be beyond the Factory's power; and these Farmers may be justified in adherence to the old methods. But in respect to the industry at large, Home production is as much an anachronism as the handloom. The Factory has come to stay: and the main question for the Farmer is, not whether he will make the Cheese himself or take his Milk to the factory, but whether he will sell his Milk



(at a poor price) to an outside Factory Company, or join with his fellows to build and run a Co-operative Factory, whose profits they would divide among themselves.

NOTE.—When the foregoing pages appeared in the *New Review*, they were subjected to criticism in the *Smør Tidende*, the official organ of the Danish Butter Trade. Objection was taken to my reproduction of the English analysts' statements respecting certain samples of Danish butter. It is only fair that I should quote the Danish explanation: 'It is all right with the 890 examinations of samples, as also that the English analysts declared the numbers mentioned as adulterated. We cannot speak for Germany and Holland, although as for the latter country we have very great doubts about the correctness of the English statements, which were also at the time emphatically protested against by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce, but we know for a certainty that no butter adulteration is going on in Denmark, and that the eight samples declared adulterated were in reality pure butter, made exclusively from cow-milk. If Mr. Williams wanted to bring to the front this old story (for it is an old story that has made its round in most of the English papers' agricultural departments), and if he is familiar with the subject upon which he is writing, he cannot fail to know that with prompt investigation instituted by the Danish Government, it was proved beyond a doubt that the butter in question was perfectly pure, as also that it was made clear to the chemists at Somerset House that their method of analysing butter was not at all times to be absolutely relied upon. At certain times of the year, when the cows are "old-milking," the butter will, by a certain process of analysing, show a comparatively low percentage of butter fat, and if the test is made dependent solely on such a percentage the chemists run the risk of being misled, and of doing injustice to producers or owners of the butter. Our Government, on the occasion above mentioned, immediately sent across to England a prominent Danish analyst, who has the widest experience of butter analysis. He conferred with his English colleagues upon the subject, and we have reason to believe that more care will be exercised in future on the part of English analysts, before Danish autumn-made butter of a certain texture is declared adulterated. No country in Europe has more stringent legislation to prevent butter adulteration than Denmark, and in reality not a single case has occurred for many years past.'

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## IV.

*THE ORCHARD AND THE POULTRY RUN.*

## FRUIT.

BESIDES oranges, lemons, and 'unenumerated,' there were imported into this country last year 8,263,882 bushels of Raw Fruit, valued at £2,579,568. That is twice as much as the import of twenty years ago, and much the greater part of it might have been grown, and grown better, in the United Kingdom. Many parts of England are pre-eminently frugiferous, and both experiment and the opinion of experts tell that many more are capable of producing that excellent quality for which the country is famous. Moreover, even in these years of depression, a well-managed orchard can be made to pay a profit denied to grain or even grass. Yet Covent Garden is swamped with apples from America, cherries from France, grapes from Spain, pears from Belgium, and our farmers are at their wits' end to find the wherewithal on quarter-day. I am not following a distinguished example, and contemptuously answering 'Jam' to an industry in distress: to tell farmers that they should abandon all thoughts of wheat, and cover their corn lands with saplings is mere foolishness. But I do desire to urge upon British and Irish Agriculturists the clamant stupidity of allowing one of the most enticing and the most profitable branches of Rural Industry to be eaten up by the Foreigner.

It is not a question of natural adaptability, this inroad of the Foreign Fruit-Grower. Who would eat an American apple if an English one were on the table? To go hunting to the uttermost ends of the earth for Fruit which could be grown much better in our own

villages is surely to reduce the practice of economics to a farce. This argument applies also to most other Agricultural Produce; but in the case of Wheat there are considerations which have much less force in the case of Fruit. Owing to the favourable circumstances of Foreign Wheat-Growers and the unfavourable circumstances which crush their British rivals, it has become all but impossible for us to make corn pay; but even to-day, despite heavy and unjust burdens on the land, despite preferential railway rates for Foreign Produce, despite the organization and the progressive methods of the foreigner, it is possible to make money out of English orchards, and the depression of the past decade has served to throw their profitableness into a clearer light. Herefordshire has been largely spared, and a Herefordshire M.P. (Mr. James Rankin) attributes this to the fact that Hereford 'is a great fruit-growing county,' and that orchards have 'given a value to land which would not without it have had a value.\*' He instanced his own farm, which had twelve acres of orchard and produced in one year thirty tons of apples. The price they fetched was low, only about £1 a ton, yet this meant a return of £2 10s. per acre. Again, Mr. A. Wilson-Fox, speaking of Cambridgeshire, which he visited as a Special Commissioner, said 'that the fruit people were doing better than anybody else, in spite of Foreign Competition.†' Of course, the opposite view is heard, for man is never at a loss for excellent arguments against all suggestions for improving his condition. Side by side with testimony to the profitableness of Fruit by men who had tried it comes the usual tale from others that fruit-growing

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I., p. 155.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 413.

is not followed to any extent. From Devon, from Shropshire, from Huntingdonshire, there is the same monotonous story: 'Very little fruit-growing in our country.' That Foreign Competition is keen, that it eats into the British producers' profits, is undeniable. Plum growers, for example, suffer heavily in pocket by the presence every year on the English market of half a million bushels of Foreign Plums. About 25 per cent. of the plum jam made in England is from Foreign Fruit which jam factories buy cheap; as a consequence they beat down the price to the English growers and refer such of them as complain to the low price at which the Foreign article is bought. In some districts Foreign Competition has not only cut the Home Producer's profits, but has driven him out of the business. A Fifeshire witness before the Agricultural Commission said that in his county and in Perthshire the growers had become so utterly disheartened by the ruinous effects of Foreign Competition that they had given up planting new trees.\*

But this evidence does not contradict what I said as to the present profitableness of fruit-growing. I adduce it for two reasons: (1) To moderate the optimism of any who may try to minimize the evil wrought by Foreign Competition; (2) to call your attention to a crucial point. Fruit-growing, like most other industries, depends for its profitableness not a little on the way in which it is done. Such Farmers as grow fruit as a minor branch are apt to make an unfortunate analogy. Because the orchard is small in acreage, they commonly think fit to treat it according to its size, so that, in fact, it is too often left to take care of itself. Now this an orchard will not stand.

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 201.

Mr. Rankin sorrowfully admitted that even in a notable fruit county like Herefordshire many orchards were in a 'shocking condition,' and Dr. Frean, speaking of a yet more famous county—Kent—said that the market was being injured by the raising of poor fruit.\* It is the old story. We are throwing away our natural supremacy by carelessness, and not even the soil and climate of England will for ever avail to produce the best unless the orchard be properly nurtured. As Dr. Frean said, 'The growing of the best fruit pays.' One may round this off by asserting that, in view of the Foreign Competition, none but the best can be expected to pay. Here, then, is a lesson for the English Fruit-Grower: Let him respond to nature's lead by careful and intelligent work, that so English fruit shall permanently take its rightful position, which is one far out of reach by anything the Foreigner can grow. At present the Foreign Encroachment is not owing to natural superiority, but, as Lord Winchilsea points out, 'to the skill with which the Foreigner selects those fruits that are suited to the needs of his customers, the care with which he sorts, grades, and packs them, the infinite taste he exhibits in their arrangement, and the methodical and business-like arrangements which he makes with Railway Companies to convey large and regular consignments at specially low rates.'†

*Apples.*

The Apple is pre-eminently an English fruit; yet the Apple is the special mark of the Foreigner. Here is our Import in recent years:

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I., p. 344.

† 'The Fruit-Growers' Year Book,' 1897, pp. 55, 56.

*Import of Raw Apples into the United Kingdom.*

Average '84-86.	Average '87-89.	Average '90-92.	Average '93-95.	'96.
bushels. 2,776,315	bushels. 3,117,789	bushels. 3,412,343	bushels. 3,906,972	bushels. 6,717,192

The following table will show whence they come :

*Import of Raw Apples into the United Kingdom in '95.*

	Bushels.	Value.
		£
From the United States ... ..	984,413	387,018
„ Belgium ... ..	580,953	144,348
„ Holland ... ..	242,961	71,782
„ France ... ..	184,913	43,160
„ Portugal ... ..	90,631	20,119
„ Germany ... ..	27,330	7,946
„ Other Foreign Countries ... ..	551	171
„ Canada ... ..	1,006,595	278,158
„ Tasmania ... ..	122,412	60,893
„ Victoria ... ..	36,552	22,080
„ Channel Islands ... ..	12,245	3,320
„ Other Colonies and Possessions ...	2,706	1,278
TOTAL ... ..	3,292,262	£960,273

The '95 import was lower than that for '94, and very much lower than that for '96, but I have not the detailed figures for last year. You will note that, though Canada leads in the matter of quantity, the United States is ahead in value.

If English Fruit-Growers are to win back the Apple Market they will have to adopt better methods both in cultivation and in sale. The work of kicking out the Foreigner can prove no easy one. It is not a question of maintaining a threatened supremacy, but rather of developing a new industry. Intelligence and enterprise must be brought to bear upon the orchard. Technical

advice lies outside my province, but one or two general hints will not perhaps be amiss. The first reform is the planting of trees of the finest quality for the table. The English Fruit-Grower's line is excellence, and though he grows the best Apples even now, the supply is very limited. It is asserted that recent years have witnessed an improvement in the production of the finest quality, but one is almost disposed to doubt it. For instance, one of the most delicious, if not the most delicious, of all apples is the Ribston Pippin. Old people tell you that it was common enough in the English orchards of their youth, but it is now so scarce that the most of us are strangers to it. Mr. Archibald Weir, writing in 'The Fruit-Growers' Year Book' on the future of English apple-growing, pins his faith to Cox's Orange Pippin. The task of the immediate future, he says, is to grow this kind in great abundance and of supreme excellence, in which way he prophesies England will become an exporter of the best instead of the importer that she is. He also predicts that, having thus gained a vantage-ground in the fruit market, English growers will be able to follow up their victory by attacking the cheaper sorts. But he admits that Cox's Orange Pippin is a difficult apple to grow well, and that, though it can be made very remunerative, it needs much skill and care. He lays down many rules of cultivation worthy the Fruit-Grower's heed. I can only reproduce here his warning that 'it is impossible to grow the best fruit in the grass orchards of old,' and that Englishmen must copy the foreigners in the patient industry which they devote to the nurture of the trees and their protection from scab, and mildew, and insect pests, all evils which exist abroad to an even greater extent than here. He suggests that landlords should start experimental holdings for the production of high-class apples, and that small capitalists

should form freehold plantations. The thing is worth doing. Mr. Weir asserts, from his own experience, that 'many trees paid for themselves, the freehold of the ground they stood on, and for six years' cultivation by the crop borne in the sixth year after planting.' In truth, there is money in the orchard as well as health and pleasure.

Another point is Storage. If apples are to be kept, and kept good, for any length of time, they must be properly garnered away from light and heat and variable temperature. The English Fruit-Grower is behind in this matter, too, though the outlay on a proper shed is not great. It has been suggested (by Mr. George Bunyard, Vice-President of the Fruit Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society) that the principle of Co-operation might have play here. His idea is the erection near Railway Stations of specially constructed stores, thickly thatched with fern, where fruit could be received from the growers, and properly graded and stored by experienced hands. Mr. Bunyard suggests a syndicate to buy the growers' produce; but the better way would be to have a Co-operative Store-House, after the manner of the Co-operative Dairy. At any rate, in some form or other, our apple-growers must study better storage if they wish to capture the market during the winter months.\*

\* In connection with this subject, the following record will be of interest; it is from the *Daily Chronicle* of the 17th April: 'An interesting experiment in the preservation of fruit by means of cold storage has been carried out during the past season by the Technical Education Committee of Kent County Council at Dartford. The test has been superintended by two members of the committee, Messrs. Hesketh and Chambers, whose reports are now issued. They state that the stores were kept at steady temperatures of 30° and 40° until near the end of the year, when it was considered there would be no further utility in prolonging the experiment under the same conditions. Mr. Hesketh's report proceeds: "The fruit loses weight somewhat during the refrigerating process, as is evident by the amount of moisture collected off the brine walls, which amounts to 1·5 per cent. of the weight of the fruit per week. This moisture is absorbed from the



*Cider.*

Of late there has been an increased consumption of Cider; so that we are perfectly prepared for the statement laid before the Agricultural Commission that the Kentish Cider Industry is almost extinct; so says Mr. Ernest Samson, late Secretary of the National Association of Cider Makers.\* True, the acreage of orchard in Britain has increased during the last twenty years, so that certain counties are evidently trying to atone for the slackness of Kent and Norfolk, and the rest; but they are not doing enough to keep out the Foreigner. Here is the registered import of Cider and Perry, all duty

fruits by the air during its natural circulation in the chamber, and deposited on the colder surfaces of the brine walls, from which it is drained away. The air is thus kept in a dry condition. An object in future experiments will be to reduce this desiccation of the fruit, but still maintain the dry condition of the air, which is so essential in avoiding mildew. A careful log has been kept of the working expenses, and this shows that the total cost of engine power (gas at 3s. 6d. per 1,000 cubic feet being used in an engine) and all stores amounted to 8s. 9d. per day. This does not include anything for labour, as only the occasional attention of a labourer otherwise employed is required. The cost of working by an oil-engine would be approximately the same. The refrigerating machine, which is the smallest size practicable, was capable of dealing with a much larger chamber, its average hours of working per day being only three and a half. If an average of twelve hours a day for the working of the machine is taken, it could then maintain a store 24 ft. by 24 ft. by 8 ft. high, which would be capable of storing some 2,000 bushels of apples. The cost of working the machine on such a chamber, based on the experience gained in the recent experiment, would be 2s. 2d. per day. Of course, larger installations would cost much less to work in proportion to the quantity of fruit kept. It is proposed to make experiments during the coming summer on the soft fruits as they come in season." In that portion of the experimental work managed by Mr. Chambers,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  bushels of fruit were stored in the chambers for 101 days, and  $35\frac{1}{2}$  bushels for fifty-six days. Mr. Chambers states that some of the summer apples left in the store until the close of the experiment were found to be sound, but were not so good in flavour, and were somewhat soft. On the other hand, the winter apples were of as good flavour as when put in, and were fully as hard and sound.'

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 97. This statement was made in May, '95; but during the last two years there have been most encouraging signs of revival.

free, for the last four years, for which I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. T. J. Pittar, the Statistician of Her Majesty's Customs :

				Gallons.	Value. £
'93	...	...	...	558,108	23,814
'94	...	...	...	431,155	17,309
'95	...	...	...	603,190	21,826
'96	...	...	...	321,016	11,036

(The smallness of the '96 import is the result of our record Apple Season of '95.) Nearly all this comes from America, though France sends a little, and Germany is just getting her hand in.

Both these latter imports are of excellent quality: the American is not; it is mostly made from refuse table fruit, instead of from vintage fruit.\* And, according to Mr. Radcliffe Cooke, M.P., it is frequently 'blended by dishonest cider-makers in England with English Cider and sold as English.' There is a big and growing export of Cider to the Cape, South America, etc.; but it is from Germany and France. We have no appreciable part in it; yet, in spite of falling prices, in some parts of the country cider-making is the most profitable branch of the farmer's business. Mr. Samson says that good Cider sells easily at from 10d. to 1s. a gallon, which leaves the maker a substantial profit; and if the maker have the wit and the enterprise to bottle his produce the profits are big. But poor Cider does not pay; and poor Cider is the result partly of deteriorated orchards, partly of lack of skill, which last is hard to come by. The good cider-makers have a traditional, empirical kind of knowledge which is difficult to impart; the book learning is only to be got in French and German, which are not much read in English villages. The National Association

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 9.

of Cider Makers did somewhat in the way of teaching, and one or two County Councils have sent round instructors. But they must do a great deal more. Here is a chance for the Board of Agriculture. Mr. Radcliffe Cooke suggests that the State should offer premiums for the planting of orchards with the best kinds of vintage fruits, and should gratuitously distribute stocks grafted with the best (both these forms of State Aid are in operation in other countries, the Prussian Government being especially generous in its assistance). But Education is the great need: good apples are good, but good methods are better. Mr. Neville Grenville, of Glastonbury, illustrated this point by experiment. He bought a lot of apples, without much regard to quality, from growers in the neighbourhood, and, by adopting good methods, he turned them into excellent Cider, which sold easily at 10d. a gallon. A neighbour bought the same kinds, but did not adopt equally good methods, and his Cider was so poor that it went 6d. a gallon cheaper. All the same I do not wish to minimize the necessity for good fruit; our farmers must re-stock their deteriorated orchards. Also they must get legislative protection against the spread of parasites. When one man (as so frequently happens) allows his trees to become infested, his neighbours suffer with the first breeze which sets in their direction, and the havoc is general. There must be an Act of Parliament to stop this bad citizenship; and if a man lets his orchard get foul, it must be cleaned for him by the local authority *at his expense*. Lastly, let me point out the prospects which Cider-Making holds out to the small holder. This is just the sort of rural industry which a man with two or three acres can run with profit, particularly with the aid of Co-operation. Why should not small holders combine for Cider-Making? It has been estimated that the total cost of renewing an orchard

is not far short of £1 a tree, including original purchase, planting, and protection—or from £40 to £50 an acre; but this total is spread over a number of years. The actual cost of the trees is only about an eighth of it, and in the case of small holders, who do their own labour, the remainder would be eliminated. Of course, even this comparatively small sum would be more than most working-men could pay; they would need recourse to an Agricultural Bank.

#### THE MARKET GARDEN.

Our import of Raw Vegetables has doubled during the last decade. It nearly sextupled itself in the last generation. Thus :

#### *Value of Import of Raw Vegetables into the United Kingdom.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
£ 499,660	£ 1,602,403	£ 1,979,331	£ 2,069,245	£ 2,870,107	£ 2,874,388

The *Daily Chronicle*, in a leading article in its issue of April 29, commenting on my production of this table, says: 'In the matter of vegetables Mr. Williams is aghast because our imports have doubled in the last ten years. That we eat more vegetables, and that there are more of us to eat them than there were ten years ago, is a trifle beneath the notice of the defender of our farms and market gardens.' It has not escaped my notice that the population of this country has increased in the last decade; and I am willing to grant (if the *Chronicle* will have it so) that we eat more vegetables than we did ten years ago: though I am not aware that vegetarian philosophy has triumphed to an extent corresponding to

the growth in the import. Perhaps the following table will help the *Chronicle* :

*Value per Head of the Population in the United Kingdom of Raw Imported Vegetables.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
s. d. 0 4	s. d. 1 0	s. d. 1 1	s. d. 1 1	s. d. 1 6	s. d. 1 5½

And this with declining prices.

The major part of the import consists of Potatoes and Onions. We imported Onions in '96 to the value of £681,879. Our import of Potatoes cost us £907,875, but of this sum £563,562 went to the Channel Islands, France coming next with £239,479. The largest exporters of Onions are Spain, Egypt, and Holland.

What I have written respecting Fruit-Growing as a palliative of Agricultural Depression, and of its immunity therefrom, applies also to market gardening. Though market gardening ground commands a higher rent than ordinary farming land the cultivator gets a much better return for his expenditure and labour. It is not every soil that is adapted to market gardening, but there are undoubtedly very many parts of the country where the industry might be pursued with profit. There is quite enough suitable land to grow at least much the greater part of our enormous Import. Farmers who have combined Vegetable-Growing with their other cultivation testify that it helps materially to make both ends meet, and this is particularly the case where Fruit and Vegetables are combined. This proves the rural paradox that a farmer's profits are made up of a number of losses. A farmer should not put all his eggs in one basket, or, perhaps I should say, he should not put eggs

only, or any kind of produce only, in his market-basket. Yet vegetable growing is commonly neglected. In Carmarthenshire scarce an effort is made by the farmers to grow Garden Produce for market, though the country is admirably adapted to the industry.\* A Lancashire witness before the Royal Commission admitted that he did not cultivate Vegetables himself, but that those of his neighbours who did considered they made a fair profit out of them, that the industry was not largely cultivated in the district, but that if it were, it would be to some considerable extent a remedy for Agricultural Depression.† His argument against its adoption was that it would involve higher cultivation and more labour, which is no doubt true, but in the present state of the agricultural labour market it is scarcely a reason for neglecting the industry. In South-West Scotland also a decrease in market-gardening is reported : here the alleged reason is the decline in prices in consequence of competing imports.‡ This price-cutting by the foreign competitor is, of course, disheartening, but farmers have hardly a reason to give up in despair when they have a good vegetable soil ; the experience of others shows that, with a proper application of intelligence and industry to the work, market-gardening even now may be made to yield some sort of profit.

It is a pity that certain facilities for sale that once existed should be falling into desuetude. At one time Onion Fairs were common in England, but they have been gradually given up, or have shrunk into insignificance. The old Bristol Fair is a case in point. Its intention was to provide a convenient market for local people ; but in later times it was found that a good pro-

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 388.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 362.

‡ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 71.

portion of the Onions offered for sale came from Brittany, and that they could compete successfully with the home-grown article. Again, distribution is of great importance: the hand of the Middleman is specially heavy on Fruit and Vegetables. Co-operative Sale Societies are badly needed by our Vegetable Growers, and they would be an especial boon to small holders. Co-operation of this kind flourishes in France. The Co-operative Society of Agriculturists of Lot-et-Garonne at Argen sent 30,000 francs' worth of Onions to a London and Cardiff house in '93; and in the same year the Syndicate of Gardeners at Nantes sent 1,400,000 pears and 91,000 dozen bunches of radishes to the London, Liverpool, and Manchester markets.\* Suggestions with reference to better marketing have been put forward, as that the Spitalfields Market Charter should be abolished. This Charter prohibits the sale of Vegetables within a radius of the privately-owned market, and so all produce has to be carted from the railway (the Great Eastern) to the market, to the damage thereof and at the consignor's expense. A market at the station itself would be a great and enduring boon.† Another suggestion is that local authorities should hold cheap markets, and this proposal might profitably engage the attention of our municipal politicians.

Attempts are made in England to export Potatoes, America being the principal consignee, but the trade fares not particularly well. Unlike our Government, that of the United States has no fancy for encouraging the Foreign Importer. It thinks it should be equal to

\* Proceedings of First International Co-operative Congress, London, 1895, pp. 342, 343.

† The Great Eastern Company, however, has a market alongside its Stratford Station for the sale of farm produce. It enables the farmer to send his stuff direct to market without the expense of London cartage charges. I am informed that the market, since its establishment in '79, has proved a great success, and has been very helpful to the East-end trade.

growing its own potatoes, so it claps a substantial duty on ours. This duty was at one time as high as 41s. a ton; it was afterwards reduced to 23s. 4d., but it will be up again under the new Tariff Law. Either duty, however, suffices to discourage the British Exporter, as may be gathered both from his own complaints and from official statistics. The British Export to the United States was 1,518,019 cwts. in '93; 849,556 cwts. in '94; and 98,517 cwts. in '95.

A word as to Ireland. It is contended that the sheltered bays of the South afford an unrivalled ground for early Vegetables and Fruit, and Mr. W. B. Hartland estimates that in Cork alone employment might thus be found for 20,000 people.\*

#### Hops.

It is recorded that in the year 1425 a certain evildoer was punished 'for that he put a kind of unwholesome weed into his brewing, called an Hopp.' At the present day the evildoers whom we would like to see punished are those who refrain from using the same unwholesome weed. We know now that Hops are good, not only for Beer, but for Agriculture. Such immunity as Kent has enjoyed from the Depression she owes in a large measure to her Hop Gardens. Indeed, in the Tunbridge Wells district the farmers make most of their profits from Hops, and some are said to have made handsome fortunes. In Herefordshire and Worcestershire also the Hop Gardens have broken the force of the Depression. In view of this fact, in view also of the possibility of extending our hop-planted area in this country, it is disquieting and regrettable to find that that area is shrinking.

\* See Report of Recess Committee, pp. 23, 24.



*Acreage under Hops in England.*

'75.	'85.	'93.	'94.	'95.	'96.
acres. 69,171	acres. 71,327	acres. 57,564	acres. 59,535	acres. 58,940	acres. 54,249

True, there has not been a corresponding growth in the Foreign Import, which was 256,444 cwts. in '75 and but 207,041 cwts. last year. It should be noted, however, that the quantity of British Beer paying excise duty grew from 26,966,349 barrels in '81 to 32,225,743 barrels in '93, which prompts the reflection that Mr. Quilter's Pure Beer Bill is badly wanted. But Foreign Competition is very severely felt. I have not the weight of hops produced last year, but in '95 our production was 553,396 cwts. (the harvest was above the average), and our Import amounted to 217,161 cwts., one sufficiently large to affect injuriously the price of the home-grown article.

The economic conditions which the Californian Farmer enjoys (most of our Foreign Hops come from America) are more favourable than the Englishman's; he can get a profit at a lower price than the Englishman; his transport also is much cheaper. The English grower gets disheartened by this competition, so gardens go out of cultivation, and it is prophesied that, unless prices rise, the decrease in acreage will continue, for though many have made on Hops, others have lost, and lost heavily. Mr. G. W. Finn told the Agricultural Commission that in '94 one of his neighbours lost £10,000 with his hops; and farmers cannot stand *that* sort of thing for long.\*

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 301.

*The Labour Question.*

Now there are many reasons why England's Hop Gardens should be encouraged, but the chief reason is that Hops employ more labour than any other kind of farming. Mr. Finn gave the Agricultural Commission an instructive object-lesson on this point. He had two farms. On one of two hundred and fifty acres, all grazing land, his yearly labour bill was *seventy-eight pounds thirteen shillings*. On the other of two hundred and forty acres, ninety planted with hops, his yearly labour bill amounted to *three thousand and ten pounds*.<sup>\*</sup> Such a startling contrast should open the eyes (if they have eyes to see) of those fatuous ones who think it a matter of no consequence whether we grow or import our Hops. And it should convince our legislators of the importance of preserving and expanding the industry. It is estimated that every acre of Hops that goes out of cultivation means a loss of £26 a year to the working classes. Further (it is a matter of common knowledge), East Enders, in the harvesting season, go out in troops from the airless slums in which they are cooped for the rest of the year, and get needed money and scarce less needed fresh air, and what is practically wholesome recreation, in the hop-gardens of Kent. Our democratic legislators above all should make this industry their special care. Yet they will not do so. In particular those loud-voiced, self-constituted friends of the working man who sit on the Liberal benches at Westminster would shrink with horror from aiding the industry; for to do so means Protection. It is impossible to get away from the fact. Reduced railway rates and other remedies are good and necessary, but unless a tariff be put upon imported Hops

<sup>\*</sup> Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 298.

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it is useless to call on our farmers to extend a cultivation which is continually exposed to risk of loss from the low prices engendered by Foreign Competition. Surely this industry is worth protecting at any sacrifice to theory.

But Protection is not everything. A Pure Beer Act, also, is badly needed. So is better Distribution. The Farmer should get into direct touch with the Brewer, instead of selling to the Hop Factor. As with other kinds of produce, the middleman must be eliminated for the health's sake of the industry; and I would suggest that this elimination can best be achieved by the farmers organizing themselves into Co-operative Sale Societies, thereby becoming their own middlemen. They must also look carefully after quality. This warning, I believe, is needless in Kent; but in Worcestershire there has been much planting of common kinds. A sort called Fuggles, as disreputable as its name, seems much in favour there; and Hops of even lower class have been largely grown. The result of this cult is seen in the fact that when Worcestershires have been making a maximum of 72s., East Kents have been making 90s. and over.

### POULTRY.

What follows is from the *Daily Chronicle* of last Christmas Eve: 'All the world seems to be pouring its food into our markets. . . . Here again is a crate of chickens from the Crimea, with the frost of a Russian winter yet glistening on their skins. . . . And here are boxes of geese that have been hatched, and have swam (*sic*) and waded through the Landes of Southern France until the time has come for them to grace the table of some suburban householder on Christmas Day. Rabbits from New South Wales, hares and wild fowls from Finland, ducks from Normandy—all these, and scores of

others, jostle each other upon the stalls of the salesmen. Truly, some of our neo-protectionists ought to walk round our markets just now, and see the piles of food which the farmers of the world are pressing upon us. . . . Mr. Le Bras, of the Central Meat Market, showed me specimens of Servian Turkeys, which, as to feeding and dressing, would be no disgrace to any English farmyard. In fact, I think I might go so far as to say that they are quite equal, in appearance at any rate, to any that come from Norfolk or Lincolnshire. . . . The Servian farmers have been instructed by competent persons sent by him (Mr. Le Bras) how to dress their poultry properly, and how to pack it so carefully that its long journey may be undertaken in safety. It seems strange that the birds should come all this way to find a market, but it appears that the heavy duties of the State and the octroi duty in the towns keep them out of other capitals. And thus the Londoner reaps the benefit. . . .’ The *Chronicle* chuckles steadily; but being one of those ‘neo-protectionists’ whom it derides, I am unable to respond to this glee over the swamping of the London provision market by Foreign Produce, while British Farming is going to the dogs.

*Some Figures and their Explanation.*

English Farmers (so we hear from the Evidence before the Agricultural Commission\*) are prejudiced against Poultry. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that eggs and poultry are the only kinds of agricultural produce which have advanced in price in recent years; and that, owing to the decreased prices of food, the cost of rearing poultry has been reduced. Whatever the cause, this is the effect:

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 439.

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## *Value of Imports of Rabbits, Poultry, and Game.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
£ 109,696	£ 249,548	£ 575,292	£ 750,596	£ 839,360	£ 1,007,072

And here is our consumption per head :

## *Value per Head of Population of Imported Poultry, Game, and Rabbits.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
d. 1	d. 2	d. 4	d. 5	d. 5	d. 6

This Foreign Competition tells very heavily against such of our own people as do strive to supply the market. Its effect is concisely put in an answer given by Mr. R. H. Pringle, in his evidence before the Royal Commission: '(Q.) You say the moment the French parcel comes over, the English parcel fetches an unprofitable sum?—(A.) That is what this duck farmer told me. The ducks he had early in the market paid well, but the moment the Foreign Trade began to compete with them down went the price of ducks 50 per cent.\* Yet Englishmen do sometimes make duck-rearing profitable, as in the case of a Fleetwood farmer who marketed over 4,000 head in '95, and made good money over the transaction. To attempt a relation of all the causes which make for the foreigners' success would only be to repeat what I have said with respect to other industries; but I may notice one factor in the cheapness of Foreign

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 65.

Poultry. The foreigner (the Frenchman, at any rate) keeps his best poultry for the home-market, where he commands a good price, and sends his second-class stuff over here for the low-priced sale. In France, too, the Government aids the industry by organizing some of the larger shows; to recount the reasons of the Englishman's failure would also involve a repetition. Want of good marketing facilities is one of great importance, which, in view of its bearing on Co-operation, I must recapitulate. Another is want of intelligence and care; farmers will persist in regarding Poultry-Rearing as beneath their notice—as being, in fact, ‘just something for the women to look after’; and they ignore the necessity for changes of blood, and all the other details of good breeding.

The men of Sussex are showing the way. They have not yet done all they might do, or all it is to be hoped they will do, but they have already done so much that the rateable value of many parishes where Poultry Farming has been extensively adopted has increased at a time when the rateable value of other villages was falling off. This is a pretty good criterion of success. Another is furnished by the Vicar of Heathfield: he says that the profitable extension of poultry farming in Sussex has affected the early marriage rate. For the industry can be started on a minimum of capital; personal attention is the main requisite. It is therefore specially adapted to the better class of working-men who occupy small holdings. But little land is needed to keep a hundred hens, yet a Sussex farmer says that a hundred hens, properly looked after, will yield as large a return in twelve months as a hundred ewes.\* It is gratifying

\* I do not guarantee this roseate statement as representing the literal truth. A Scottish critic, when these lines appeared in the *New Review*, made merry over my ‘gravely accepting’ such a statement.

to learn that the example of Sussex is being followed, albeit in a slighter degree, in Norfolk, as well as in that unfortunate county, Essex. So far as lack of knowledge goes, it is pleasant to be able to record that one local body, at any rate, the East Riding County Council, has apprehended the need of sending round lecturers to the villages; and I understand that the Yorkshire Council's example has since been followed by other County Councils. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Councils all over the Kingdom will, by the aid of expert instruction, encourage the industry in their districts. In this manner they will not only help to make ordinary farming more profitable, but also they will do much to raise the status and improve the prospects of the agricultural labourer, and prevent all the good men among them from migrating to the towns.

### *Eggs.*

Our Import is a scandal. Here are some figures :

#### *Import of Eggs into the United Kingdom.*

Average '61-65.	Average '71-75.	Average '81-85.	Average '86-90.	Average '91-95.	'96.
No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
280,375,000	802,863,000	901,095,000	1,123,781,000	1,377,911,000	1,589,387,000

We import, it is estimated, 35 per cent. of the eggs that we consume, and the demand is steadily increasing. Mr. Edward Brown, our chief authority, estimates that the consumption has doubled in fifteen years, but this is owing, doubtless, in a large measure to the increased use of eggs in manufacture. Here are the sources of

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Whether it be accurate or exaggerated, it is practical testimony to the profit to be found in the Poultry-run. And so, *pace* my critic, I repeat it.

the 'New Laid Eggs' which go to furnish forth our grocers' shops:

*Import of Eggs into the United Kingdom in '96.*

	Great Hundreds.	Value.
		£
From France ... ..	3,275,776	1,273,200
„ Belgium ... ..	2,243,789	649,283
„ Germany ... ..	2,930,486	782,121
„ Russia ... ..	2,406,168	630,002
„ Denmark ... ..	1,566,623	522,985
„ Canada... ..	500,819	178,931
„ Other Countries ...	321,732	103,045
TOTAL ... ..	13,244,893	4,184,567

This table, however, is not altogether accurate as denoting the countries of origin. A great many of the Belgian Eggs come from Italy and Hungary, of the German from Austria and Hungary. A 'great hundred,' I should also explain, means 120. These Foreign Eggs are much cheaper than English, which fetch an average price of from 10s. to 11s. a great hundred, while the Foreigners vary a good deal, Russians being sold as low as 5s. 8d.

The fact that despite foreign competition English eggs can find a market at a price much higher than the Foreigner gets should in itself be a great encouragement to the home producer, and (putting on one side the eggs used for manufacture) British and Irish farmers should have the market in their own hands, for not even the callous consumer who welcomes American wheat and German razors is indifferent in the matter of Foreign *versus* English Eggs on his breakfast table. Moreover, Eggs pay. Their price has advanced 15 per cent. in fifteen years (I am again quoting Mr. Brown) and hens' food is cheaper. Those farmers who have had the



foresight to go with vigour into the Egg business have proved it thoroughly worth their while, and some, like the Carmarthenshire farmer referred to in the evidence before the Royal Agricultural Commission, find their Eggs to be the most profitable part of their farm. Yet the British farmer for the most part entirely neglects the industry. The Carmarthenshire farmer I have quoted is said to be the only man in his county who troubles to prosecute the business in a scientific manner.\* The market is open to the home producer if he will only trouble to enter it. Doubtless, in the cheaper sort of provision shops in large towns the low price of the foreign Egg attracts the shopkeeper, but its presence is very largely due to inability to get a full and regular supply of English Eggs, combined with the bad packing of such as may be got. The Army and Navy Stores points this moral. This establishment sells about 70,000 eggs a week, and it has tried hard to sell English Eggs, but for the most part, and for the reasons just stated, it has been forced back upon the Foreigner: special reasons for whose success are his treatment of Egg selling as a serious business, his packing, and his organization for market.

An extension of the Merchandise Marks Act would be of general advantage. When your new-laid eggs come from Italian nests, it is as well to know the fact, in case your grocer forgets to mention it: at present *only the boxes* are labelled. The eggs themselves should be stamped, and 'Laid Abroad' must not suffice. We want to know the exact country of origin. A French egg may be tolerable, but a Russian must ever be an ineffective substitute.

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. IV., p. 388.

## V.

*THE POSSIBILITIES OF BEETROOT.*

THE question of Beet-sugar is dealt with in this country chiefly from the standpoints of the British refiner and the Colonial planter and factor; it is thus, indeed, that the matter has been principally regarded ever since Continental countries began to wreak havoc in our sugar trades. But the subject also demands consideration from the agricultural standpoint. The wide use of Beet-root for sugar-making, and the great improvements in its manufacture, are evidence that, for good or evil, Beet has come to stay. It has been a godsend to the Continental agriculturist; might it not also prove beneficent to the British agriculturist?

But the experiment has been twice tried and failed; thus, no doubt, will exclaim the sceptic who has heard something of the matter. And in order that the failures to which he refers may not rankle in his mind while reading this short exposition of the possibilities of Beet in these islands, let me begin by a reference to the Lavenham disasters. In the early seventies Mr. James Duncan, practical champion and untiring worker in the cause of British Sugar, acted on a conviction he entertained regarding the possibilities of successful sugar-beet growing in England. Under his direction, and entirely at his expense, a sugar factory was erected at Lavenham, in Suffolk, and the neighbouring farmers were induced to grow Beet to feed it. And here is where the main cause of failure came in. The supply of roots never exceeded 8,000 tons, whereas more than twice that number were required. But there were various other

causes. There was insufficient horse-power for carting the roots. The land about Lavenham is heavy, so was not well suited to the traction engine which was put on to supplement the horse deficiency. Then there was trouble about the river, which was blackened by char water and rootlets, and at the time there was no land to spare for subsidizing ponds to meet the difficulty. So the experiment was abandoned. A decade later a new start was made under other management, and the last-mentioned difficulty was removed; but worse were encountered. The new directors spent a lot of money in acquiring the right to use strontia for extracting sugar from the roots. It was a costly process and turned out a complete failure; and as the premises were not fitted with other methods, and there was no working capital left, they were again shut down. The catastrophe was aided by the loss suffered through keeping the roots until February before extracting the juice, as the refiner was not ready to receive the sugar in the autumn; but decomposition waits on no man, and the roots were in that way when the work of extraction was commenced. And that is the story of Lavenham. Attempts are even now being made, I understand, to start a third time, and, as they will be made in the light of experience and under more favourable auspices generally, there seems no reason why they should not achieve a measure of success. For it is evident to anyone studying the facts that the Lavenham misfortunes were accidental and not inherent. The cramped area of cultivation might be extended, a light railway might facilitate transport, the riparian difficulty has been overcome, the expenditure of capital might be undertaken more carefully, the mistake of an expensive and futile process avoided, and better arrangements entered into with the refinery. Nothing that happened in the Lavenham experiments can be interpreted into a

sign of failure for the future of the industry in this country.

But, given proper management, and reasonable luck, is there any natural drawback to the cultivation of sugar-beet in these islands? Statistical evidence emphatically exclaims No! So far from the soil and climate of the United Kingdom being less favourable than those of Continental countries, they have been proved to be more favourable. Numerous experiments have been and are being made. The most notable are those which have been conducted by Dr. Shack-Sommer, the eminent specialist in agricultural chemistry. It is impossible to reproduce the figures of many of the results; the experiments extend over a period of several years, and were undertaken in various parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. I will give as example the average results for 1893:

	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Germany.
Number of experiments	22	22	2	—
Average weight of entire plant in grammes	1,447	1,191	673	697
Average weight of roots alone in grammes	927	658	356	382
Quantity of sugar in 100 parts of the juice... ..	13.64	14.00	14.83	15.11
Quantity of roots without leaves grown per acre ... ..	ton. cwt. qr. lb. 19 9 1 0	ton. cwt. qr. lb. 26 8 3 0	ton. cwt. qr. lb. 14 15 0 0	ton. cwt. qr. lb. 11 1 3 2
Quantity of sugar per acre ... ..	2 13 0 10	3 14 0 3	2 3 3 0	1 7 0 4

Here we see that Germany (which, with the exception of Belgium, is by far the most prolific Beet country) can produce roots which in themselves are richer in juice than those hitherto cultivated in the United Kingdom, but that, her crops being so much lighter, the actual quantity of sugar per acre which she can obtain is only about half that which English soil gives, a little more than half that of Irish, and but little more than one-third that of Scottish! Surely these figures prove beyond question that the natural advantages for Beet cultivation in these Islands are immensely superior to those of the Continent. It may be objected that special experiments are, from the manner in which they are selected and conducted, likely to give better results than the average achieved in normal cultivation on a big scale; but the circumstances do not indicate any force in the criticism. In the first place, as the above table shows, the English and Scotch experiments from which the averages were struck were pretty extensive in number; in the second place, the farmers who grew the beet were novices at the work, and they have (in some instances, at any rate) been slack to carry out the experiments according to all the needful directions in respect to ploughing, thinning, etc. This second circumstance shifts the probability of better cultivation on to the German.

Let me now forestall an objection to Beet-growing, the possibility of which may give pause to the practical agriculturist. Would the cultivation have a bad effect on the soil? Luckily we have experience to guide us to an answer. Dr. Shack-Sommer, in a paper read by him before the Society of Chemical Industry, adduced instances from France and Germany which proved that the soil had been benefited by the introduction of Beet. Not only were succeeding Beet crops better than their predecessors,

but the rotatory crops of corn exhibited distinct improvement. In addition, the French estate which was quoted was able, after the introduction of Beet, to support a much greater number of cattle than before. Of course, due regard to rotation must be observed. Beet should alternate with grains, grass, and leguminous plants. Experts think that a Beet crop may safely be ventured upon every fourth year; as a fact, in Germany to-day the cultivation is even more frequent.

I am not recommending the indiscriminate sowing of Beet. There are climates and there are soils within the United Kingdom where the cultivation would be hazardous, even disastrous. The humid autumns of the West of England would not be favourable to the ripening of Beet, nor is mountainous land worth cultivating; there the summer is too short, and the yield of sugar would not suffice for a profit. The proper soil is a loam containing lime, with a well-drained bottom. Deep ploughing is necessary. So is proper manuring; dung is considered the best, but chemical manures may be used with great advantage. In Germany nitrate is commonly used, and its introduction in a cheap form into Europe is regarded by some as a factor of such importance in the extension of Continental Beet culture as to rank almost with Government bounties as a motive power in the huge output of beet-sugar.

So much for the technical aspect. Glance now at the national good which would be derived from the profitable cultivation on a large scale of Beetroot in the United Kingdom. It is difficult to write of this otherwise than in superlatives. But in the most moderate view it would be immense. We imported in '95 about 1,165,000 tons of refined and unrefined beet-sugar from Europe. If the roots which made it had been grown in this country, over half a million acres of land would have been em-

played. With respect to the money return: some five years ago Dr. Schack-Sommer compiled an estimate of the total cost of Beet-growing in Germany, including taxes, interest on ground, capital, and all outgoings, and his total cost per acre was £12 13s. Deduct this from the amount realized for the crop, £18 8s. 6d., and you have a net profit to the farmer of £5 15s. 6d. per acre: a sufficient explanation of the statement that the Continental farmer finds no other crop so profitable as Beet.

Now, some fifteen years ago Mr. J. A. Clarke made an exhaustive estimate of the cost of Beet production in England. His figure was £13 7s. 6d. per acre, and since this calculation was made some of the items in it—rent, for example—have become lowered. The cost of production in the two countries is therefore pretty nearly equal, and it is fair to assume a corresponding equality in price. This means—taking into account the greater productivity of the root in this country—that the British farmer would realize an even better profit than the German. It should be borne in mind, too, that the money which the farmer obtains for his roots is not the sole benefit he derives from the crop. He has food for his stock thrown in. Not only are there the tops, but there is the residual fibre after the extraction of the juice. This fibre forms excellent cattle-food; it is as nutritious as the uncrushed Beet, and can easily be kept. In Germany, it is the practice to return this pulp to the farmer free of charge. Agriculture could not, therefore, fail to benefit hugely, and, curiously enough, the very districts wherein at present it is suffering worst are those which experiment teaches are the most favourable to the growth of sugar-beet. Mr. Duncan, after very careful trials, is of opinion that the East of England and the West of Ireland are the best adapted districts in the

United Kingdom; and there are no parts of the country more in need of betterment.

But something more is wanted than good soil and climate: there must be a sugar factory at hand to receive the roots. On the Continent the farmers often provide their own factory. This they do by joint effort, and each farmer in the local association undertakes to deliver to the factory a certain weight of beet-root at a stipulated price during the season. If prospects are favourable, further lots are sometimes bought in the open market and worked up with the contract supplies. Such a system might be adopted here, or the sugar-factories might be in the hands of independent companies. But, whatever the system, sugar-factories there would have to be; and that brings us face to face with the one obstacle in the path. Sugar sells in Germany to-day at a price which is at least ten shillings a ton (a pound would probably be nearer the mark) beneath the cost of production; the profit is made out of the export bounty. Obviously, then, so long as the bounty-fed product from the Continent is granted free admittance to this country, British sugar-factors would be exposed to the peril of underselling. And so long as this danger lasts we cannot expect that much capital will be put into the erection of sugar-factories. Meditation hereon may give the Englishman a notion of the price he pays for the privilege of unlimited consumption of foreign sugar. He is taught by Cobdenite politicians that the free admission of bounty-fed sugar accounts for the cheapness of sugar. Nothing is more delusive. The British consumer does not get the bounty, or, at any rate, what he gets of it is so fractional in amount that it makes no difference in the price per pound. Sugar has been cheapened marvellously in recent years, of course; so have other articles of consumption, and to a



greater degree, and without bounties. Consider, then, what we pay for our purblind pursuit of this Free-trade Will-o'-the-wisp. We abandon the chance of profitable employment of much labour and capital in sugar-factories, and, *à fortiori*, we abandon the profitable employment in allied trades, mechanical and other, which would follow from the erection and working of sugar-factories. Above all, we throw aside an effective natural means of raising Agriculture from the slough of despond into which it has fallen.

I have dwelt on the technical side of this matter because I wish to impress upon the public that the sugar-beet industry awaits instant and—bounties apart—profitable prosecution in this country, rather than from any immediate hope that it will be practised; for bounties cannot be set apart from the consideration. They are an integral factor, and until we abolish them by the imposition of countervailing duties, our hope is little likely to be realized. The Free-trade fetish in its maddest manifestation effectually blocks the way.

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## VI.

### TRANSPORT.

#### *The Sins of the Companies.*

THE hand of the Railway Companies has in the past lain heavily upon British Agriculture. And with the development of Imports in recent years the evil became at once more apparent and more real. For conspicuous among the facilities enjoyed by Foreign Producers was the cheaper transport granted over English railways. The

evil became so clamant that it was made the subject of legislation ; and in the last great Railway enactment—the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1888—it was found necessary to add to one of the sections a provision ‘ that no Railway Company shall make, nor shall the Court or the Commissioners sanction, any difference, in the tolls, rates, or charges, made for or any difference in the treatment of home and foreign merchandise, in respect of the same or similar services.’ The economist of the future, unless he have an intimate acquaintance with the facts, will assuredly be puzzled over this enactment, and in danger of giving it a wrong interpretation. For, unprompted by a knowledge of the circumstances, he would naturally interpret the proviso into an enactment that thenceforth Railway Companies should cease to give a patriotic preference to Home Produce, and that they should deal with Produce Imported in a spirit of equal generosity. That student would go very far astray. What the section did ordain was that Produce Imported should not be treated with greater generosity than Home Produce ; that is to say—in the opinion of the Legislature Railway Companies had in the past actually *favoured the Foreigner at the expense of the Home Producer*, and the Legislature was determined that such a scandal should cease. That preferential rates to Foreign Produce do constitute a very grave scandal is certain ; but it may be worth while to point out that the sin of the Companies is aggravated by the position taken up by each of them when it went to Parliament for powers to build. When a Railway Company goes to Westminster for this purpose, it advances as a reason for its request that construction is meant to benefit, and will substantially benefit, the industry of the district it proposes to traverse. When, having constructed, it favours the Foreign Importer at the expense of the Home Producer,

it does more than fail to redeem its pledge—it positively and flagrantly breaks the promise by which it obtained its Parliamentary Charter.

Before discussing the causes of this anomaly I will adduce a few instances of its operation. Mr. S. Smith, M.P., told the Agricultural Commission that he could get grain from San Francisco to his flour mills at Barrow (a four and a half months' voyage by sailing ship) for 17s. 6d. to 20s. a ton—which was what he had to pay per ton from Lincolnshire to Barrow.\* A farmer told the same Commission that to equalize his railway rates on grain with those paid by the Foreigner would mean for him a saving of 9d. a quarter.† A ton of straw from Ottawa to London costs 20s. 7d. per ton; a ton of straw from Yorkshire to London costs 22s. 4d. Neither is live stock in better case. A witness before the Agricultural Commission stated that it cost him £6 15s. to bring a bull from Kirriemuir (Forfarshire) to his place in Worcestershire; while he could get one from Canada for £4 4s.‡ The same witness attested that sporting dogs are conveyed in a horse-box for £5 from Gloucestershire to Kirriemuir; but to horse-box a bull (a prime influence in rural industry) between the same points cost £6 15s. Grave instances of Foreign Preference by the Southern Companies were put in evidence before the Agricultural Commission by Mr. Berry.§ He handed the Commission a table of examples culled from the rates on the South-Eastern and the Chatham and Dover Railways, which constitute a really formidable indictment. Thus: on the Chatham and Dover, the through rate from Calais to London for French butter was £1

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I., p. 272.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 284.

‡ *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 277.

§ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 93 *et seq.* and 527-8.

per ton. Now the water-rate from Calais to Dover was 15s. per ton, which leaves 5s. to the railway; but the railway rate on English butter sent from Dover to London is 12s. 3d., and from Canterbury (whence there is a traffic in English butter) 11s. 9d. per ton. On potatoes the through rate per ton from Calais to London was 13s. 9d., of which the sea-rate was 8s. 4d.; but the rate on English potatoes from Dover to London was 10s. 6d., and from Canterbury to London 10s. The difference between the charges amounted (in Mr. Berry's estimation) to £2 an acre: which is equal to the rent on English land! Again, on eggs the through-rate from Boulogne to London was 30s. 6d. per 1,000 kilos, of which 26s. = Boulogne to Folkestone, leaving only 4s. 6d. per 1,000 kilos, or 4s. 9d. per ton, for the railway rate from Folkestone to London. But the railway rate on English eggs from Folkestone to London was 25s. 8d. per ton, and from Canterbury 25s.

The famous revision of rates, instituted by the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1888, mended matters no whit. Certain maximum rates were forcibly reduced; but on the 1st of January, 1893, the Companies replied by raising the vast majority of their actual rates 5 per cent. Moreover, the Companies, in making their famous all-round increase at the beginning of '93, refrained from advancing rates on Imported Agricultural Produce. In some cases, too, they, about the same time, altered their methods of charge in a manner disadvantageous to the Home Trader. For instance, drovers in charge of live stock had been allowed to travel free: this privilege has now been taken away, involving (it is estimated) an addition of 4 per cent. per head to the cost of carriage.\*

\* The Companies assert that this privilege has been grossly abused. Drovers were given passes in order that they might attend to the cattle *en route*; the Companies say that such attention was not given,

Milk had been carried by some of the Companies at per barn gallon : it is now carried at per Imperial gallon ; this means that sixteen gallons go for the money which sufficed for seventeen ; and this, it is calculated, is equivalent to an increase in the rate of  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. This indirect increase should, however, be taken in consideration with the direct decreases in Milk Rates made about the same time. As a final instance of the Companies' delinquency, small but significant, said a witness to the Agricultural Commission : ' I generally get a flour barrel with eight stone of apples from my old landlord, and the Railway Company charge me 1s. 6d. for that, just for carrying it some few miles. In some years that is nearly the price of the apples.'<sup>\*</sup>

*The Southampton Docks Case.*

There is no better way of gaining an insight into the real points at issue between the Companies and agriculturists than to consider the famous action tried in the Railway Commissioners' Court, and currently known as the Southampton Docks Case. The Applicants were the Mansion House Association of Railway and Canal Traffic for the United Kingdom, and the Defendants the London and South-Western Railway Company. I may premise that the whole affair was got up by outsiders. The real complainants were not the distressed agriculturists on the Southampton Line, whom the Mansion House Association professed to represent, but the London Docks people, who, alarmed at the growing competition of the Southampton Docks (now owned by the South Western Railway Company), sought to divert trade to

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and that the drovers were in the habit of selling their free tickets to outsiders. It was only a coincidence that the withdrawal of the passes synchronized with the general alteration in the rates.

<sup>\*</sup> Royal Commission on Agriculture, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. III, p. 95.

the Thames by getting the Court to pronounce as unduly preferential the rates at which the South-Western Company carried Imported Produce from the Southampton Docks to the London markets. I do not say that the agriculturists of Hampshire had not a grievance, but simply that this particular action was not of their undertaking, and that it was to that extent a bogus complaint. But the rebutting case put forth by the defending Company was not altogether genuine either. The real defence, and the real origin of the low rates then charged on the Imported Produce, was sea-competition: unless the stuff conveyed were charged at very low rates, it would not be railed at all, but would go to London by water, a journey which, any way, was cheaper than the cheapest the Railway Company could offer. But this, the real defence, was abandoned by the Defendants in the course of the trial. It was obviously illegal, as it implied a commission of the offence known to railway legislation as 'undue foreign preference'; so there was substituted the plea that the Imported Produce was handed to the Company in larger, more convenient, more regular consignments, and was in consequence less expensive to handle and carry, and that by these facts the preferential rates were justified. This was the issue upon which the action was tried, and in the evidence (the trial lasted seven days, besides an extra day for delivery of judgment) is to be found the pith of the whole matter which we are now discussing.

The Applicants contended that agriculturists on the Southampton line paid more for carriage to London than was charged on such foreign produce as travelled the longer journey from Southampton Docks to London. The articles complained of were bacon and hams, fresh meat, hay, lard, wool, butter, and cheese. In respect of the first four, tables were put in evidence which showed

some startling differences. Here are some excerpts:— On Imported Bacon and Hams the rate from Southampton Docks to London, a distance of seventy-six miles, was 6s. a ton; but on English Bacon and Hams from Southampton Town, the same distance, it was 17s. 11d., and from Micheldever, a distance of fifty-six and three-quarter miles, it was 15s. 9d. On Hops the rate from Southampton Docks was 6s.; while from Southampton Town it was 20s. 10d., and from Micheldever 18s. 4d. On Fresh Meat the rate from Southampton Docks was 17s. 6d.; from Southampton Town 26s. 3d., and from Micheldever 20s. 1d. On Hay the rate from Southampton Docks was 5s.; from Southampton Town it was 9s. 8d., and from Micheldever 8s. 6d. And the Mansion House Association contended that for all the articles complained of the railway performed the 'same or similar services' in respect of the home and the foreign merchandise, and that, therefore, the very great differences in charge were illegal under the Railway Traffic Act, besides being unjust to the home producers and destructive of their trade in the interests of the foreigners. That, shortly, was the Applicants' case, and taken barely, and given its accuracy, it was a very ugly case indeed against the Railway Company.

The Company's defence is so full of suggestions for the British Agriculturist and his friends that I cannot do better than summarize it at a little length. The differential rates adduced by the Applicants were not accepted by the Railway Company as fully accurate. Consideration, it was alleged, must be had of certain matters connected with terminal services and so forth; but these things are too technical for detail here. Nor is their discussion necessary; for even if we allow the correctness of the Company's criticism, there still remains an important difference between the Home and Foreign

rates. This difference the Company sought to justify by showing that the services performed by it were not 'the same or similar' in respect of the Home and the Foreign consignments, but varied in character to such a degree as to make the carriage of Home Produce less profitable than that of the Foreign, notwithstanding the higher rates charged upon it. Mr. Owens, the Company's Chief Goods Manager, deposed that the average consignment of Imported Traffic was ninety times greater than that of the Local Traffic, if you included Southampton, and was a hundred and ninety-two times greater if Southampton were excluded. He said that the Local Traffic to London earned 2·99d. per ton per truck mile, while the Imported earned 4·4d., apart from terminal services at Southampton; including them, 5·5d. Moreover, the 2·99d. was earned over a shorter distance, and so was relatively less valuable than the higher sum per mile earned by the Imported Traffic, which travelled a farther distance. But the advantage to the Company of the Imported Traffic was not exhausted by considering only the greater relative profit per truck mile. Train loads, rather than truck loads, are the test of profitableness; and the Imported Traffic travelled in fully loaded, through-running trains of forty or fifty trucks each, while the Local Produce was collected by pick-up, stopping trains, over which much more labour is expended. Now, the cost of the extra labour involved in the latter system has to be deducted from the profitableness of the Local Consignment, or (put in another way) has to be added to the rate which the Local Consignments are charged. Stopping trains also involve a greater waste of fuel, and the Company's Locomotive Superintendent estimated that the difference in the consumption of coal between a through and a pick-up goods train amounted to five pounds per mile run. Further, there is the question of



tare. An engine always draws a certain amount of unprofitable weight in the waggons, and this weight, or tare, is the same whether the trucks are lightly or heavily loaded, so that a heavy load relatively costs less to carry than a light load. Now the Imported Traffic is carried in heavy loads, while the Local Traffic goes normally in light ones.

Then the Company contended that the better packing of the Imported Produce told for much in the ease, low cost, and general profitableness of its carriage. English Bacon and Hams are delivered to the Company in small consignments, averaging 1 cwt. apiece, and are packed loose in brown paper or some other unsubstantial wrappers or bales. They have commonly to be placed in a box truck, which means a maximum load of 15 cwts. to the truck, and, whatever the kind of truck used, it is impossible to load it to anything like its full carrying capacity with loose Bacon; and other articles could not be put on the Bacon without damaging it. The loading into the trucks has to be done by hand-labour, and the consignments are liable to damage. The Imported Bacon and Hams are made damage proof by being packed in strong wooden boxes of equal size, and the boxes are loaded and unloaded by crane. The average truck load is four tons. Sir Charles Scotter, the South-Western General Manager, said that ten of these boxes, containing 7 cwts. each, could be unloaded by crane at the same expense and in the same time as 7 cwts. of loose English Bacon. (This is perhaps an exaggeration, Mr. Bennett, of a firm of Bacon Importers, calculating that American Bacon is three times as easy to handle as English.) Irish Bacon, too, is packed after the bad English model, yet in its case the charge nearly approximates to that on the Foreign; evidently sea-competition has saved the Irishman from the consequences of his fault.

Then Butter. The English was nearly always packed in flats or baskets or light boxes, and (very rarely) in light tubs. The Canadian and American comes in substantial wooden tubs, which can be loaded tier on tier; and these big consignments can be much more easily handled than the small packages of English butter. As to Cheese, too. Most of the Home Cheese travels loose and unprotected ('nude' was Mr. Owens's phrase), and the 'packed' is only packed in hampers; it is, of course, bad to load, and easily damaged by wet. The American comes in strong boxes. English Fresh Meat is in similar case. It has to be hooked round the sides of the van, and kept out of the way of other articles for its own sake as well as theirs, and being newly killed (a misfortune this, not a fault), it is more liable to damage than the Imported Chilled and Frozen. This latter, being carried in minimum consignments of five tons, is as eminently 'good loading' as its poor English rival is bad.

Nor are foodstuffs the sole offenders. English Wool is commonly handed to the Railway Company in loose and unwieldy sheets (sometimes, however, in long boxes), and, being washed, is a ready absorbent of grease and dirt. Imported Wool is packed in very heavily compressed iron-bound bales, and, being unwashed, is further immune from damage. English Hay is so badly pressed by English methods that two and a half tons occupy as much space as four and a half tons of Foreign (hydraulic pressed) Hay. The difference is not so great in Hops, but it is substantial, nevertheless. English Hops are sent in pockets of from 8 to 10 feet in length, with round ends, and make 'bad loading.' Foreign Hops come in workmanlike square bales, which are easier to handle, and do not waste space.

I need not go in detail into the lengthy and intricate judgment. The general sense of it was that the Defendant

Company had justified itself in a considerable measure by bringing forward the arguments I have related, but that in the case of some of the charges complained of—those, namely, on Fresh Meat, Hay, and Hops—the difference in charge between the Home and Foreign was greater than the circumstances warranted, to that extent constituting an illegal preference of the Foreign, and that those rates needed readjustment—a slight readjustment only in the case of Fresh Meat. Considering the gravity of the charge and its rectitude in the popular view, the general result of this action is certainly to be regarded as a victory for the Railway Company. The law was on the Company's side. Yet common-sense patriotism still bids them refrain from taking advantage of the law to the detriment of a Home Industry. It is surely in the long-run better policy to encourage the small Home Producer (who, under such stimulus, may become a large one) than to crush him out relentlessly by making the difference between Home and Foreign rates quite tally with the difference in the profitableness to the Company of Home and Foreign Produce; for the Home Producer is a certain customer to the Railway whenever he has any stuff to market: the Importer, with the seductions of a 50 per cent. cheaper water-freight ever flaunting before his eyes, is by no means certain. The rest of the moral of this very instructive case awaits the consideration of the British Farmer.

*The Conversion of the Companies.*

Some years ago a market-gardener asked a Railway Company for lower rates on small packages, and the Company replied that it would rather be without his packages. We are changing all that. Now the Railway Companies are lowering their rates, and devising schemes whereby market-gardeners may be induced to bring their

small packages to the station. They have awakened, though tardily, to the fact that a trade should not be flattered, bullied, or neglected, according to its size at the moment. The little trade will respond to flattery and fostering care as readily as the big one. And, anyway, it has now become patent to most of the men who control this country's railway systems that British Rural Industry must not be treated as of no account, even though it be already derelict and in danger of breaking up. The fillip to the railway mind which induced this happy change seems to have been supplied by the proceedings in the Southampton Docks Case. The great Railway Rates Revision had done rather harm than good. It had aroused every fighting instinct in the railway breast, and owing to the skill and wealth and power of combination among the Companies and other favouring circumstances, the fight was in the main a successful one. The distressed trader looked aghast on the result of his own handiwork, and the issue of the Southampton Docks Case a couple of years later brought him on his beam-ends. But this final blow was the best thing that could have happened to him. It pointed out the remedy, and the more far-seeing of his friends approached the most enterprising of the Railway Companies without the disastrous aid of the lawyers. Happily, they caught that Company in the act of making advances on its side, so the result was a friendly discussion and a voluntary revision of rates. The example was contagious—(Railway Companies have such frequent intercourse that they usually catch each other's complaints)—and now, I believe, there is not a railway in England or Ireland—Scotland, unfortunately, must be excepted—that has not made some attempt to encourage the Home Producer.

Lists of rates are not for the general reader, and I

must not do more than very briefly summarize the information with which I have been furnished by some of the Companies. For enterprise and progressiveness the Great Eastern stands easily first. This fact is the more notable in view of the special gravity of the Depression in the counties it serves. Essex (a witness told the Royal Commission on Agriculture) had no market-gardens because it lacked transport facilities. If it lack market-gardens in the future the transport facilities will not be responsible. On the 1st December, '95, the Great Eastern inaugurated its scheme. The chief feature is a praiseworthy attempt to bring the producer into direct contact with the consumer. Consignments of all sorts of farm and garden produce are conveyed from any station to London by fast passenger train, and delivered by express cart in London within the usual radius at a charge of 4d. for 20 lbs., with an additional penny for every additional 5 lbs., the limit of this class of consignment being 60 lbs. Not only is every sort of farm and garden produce—from eggs and flowers to cucumbers and ducks—allowed, but the consignments may be mixed to suit the customer's order. The conditions imposed are that the produce shall be forwarded in nailed boxes of a certain pattern, that it shall be conveyed at owner's risk, and that the carriage shall be prepaid. Proper packing is, of course, the all-important requirement, and to this end the Company itself provides and sells at all its stations boxes of various sizes, ranging in price from 1½d. to 5d. each. These cheap boxes do away with the necessity of returning the 'empties,' a troublesome and profit-destroying form of carriage, and their uniformity of shape makes handling and loading much easier and more profitable. Nor does the Great Eastern enterprise stop here. It has published in pamphlet form, and distributed broadcast, a directory containing the names of

some 800 residents in the counties served by the Railway who are desirous of supplying town consumers with farm and garden produce direct; and, conversely, it has supplied producers with lists of season-ticket holders, in order to bring them within touch of a class of potential customers. It has also embarked on education, by publishing another pamphlet full of instruction in the art of poultry rearing. But markets still exist, and, as the evidence in the Southampton Docks Case showed, low rates are needed for the carriage of Agricultural Produce in bulk. So the Great Eastern—it has always, by-the-by, been the most liberal in its grain rates—has prepared a revised schedule for the conveyance of vegetables in large consignments by goods train. Taking one station at random, I find that from Woodbridge to London cabbage and the rougher sorts of vegetable produce are carried for 8s. 9d. per ton in 2-ton lots, and for 7s. 11d. in 5-ton lots; celery, rhubarb, and the like are charged 11s. 3d. per ton in 2-ton lots; 12s. 1d. in 5-ton lots; or 14s. 7d. and 15s. 5d. respectively, to include delivery in London. On carrots, potatoes, and similar produce the maximum rate between any two Great Eastern stations is 8s. 4d. per ton in truck loads of 5 tons and upwards. On roots for horse and cattle food the maximum is 6s. 8d. per ton if carried in truck loads. Nor does the Company in its goods traffic always insist on truck loads. You may send from any Great Eastern station to London or suburban stations vegetables and roots for domestic consumption at rates ranging from 4½d. to 10d. per cwt., and delivery is thrown in. But low rates on very small consignments are the special feature of the Great Eastern enterprise, and these, it has been estimated by a writer in the *Times*,\* mean, broadly, that a farmer on the Great Eastern Railway can now send for a shilling what

\* *Times*, 14th November, '95.

would formerly have cost half a crown. And another correspondent\* estimated that 'the total cost of carriage under the new system amounts to about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the value of the article; the cost of the boxes, if added, represents nearly another  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.' In other words, the farmer who gets into direct communication with the London consumer pockets 96 per cent. of the gross retail price. He, at least, will have no reason to complain of exorbitant, trade-killing railway charges. It is worth notice that these Great Eastern charges are cheaper than the proposed penny per lb. parcel-post scheme, which Mr. Henniker Heaton had advocated as a cure for high railway rates.

No other Company has matched the Great Eastern, but the others have followed according to their lights. The South-Western has a special interest in view of the Southampton Docks Case, and it is gratifying to record that under the new arrangements, which came into force in December, '95, reductions, varying between 14 and 36 per cent. on the old rates, have been made on the carriage of fruit and vegetables in consignments of 1 cwt. and upwards. The Company is thus acting up to its defence at the famous trial, viz., that low rates can be secured if the consignments are large. And to this end the Company has also reduced by about 15 per cent. its rates on traffic sent in 4-ton loads. But the South-Western is likewise mindful of the little traffic, and it carries by passenger train small consignments at reduced rates. Thus any quantity of Butter up to 24 lbs. is carried any distance up to 50 miles for 6d., and a penny is charged for every additional 4 lbs. Certainly  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a lb. seems a reasonable sum for having one's butter carried into the London market (for the rate includes delivery), and can hardly afford the dairy-farmer ground

\* *Times*, 20th November, '95.

for complaining that his industry is killed by high railway charges. True, American butter is also delivered in London at  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a lb. freight for the whole journey, but the consignments are very much heavier than the English farmers' small parcels. Cream, eggs, game, poultry, rabbits, fruit, vegetables, honey, etc., are also carried by passenger train at rates which approximate to the butter scale. The Great Western arrangements are very similar. This Company, by publishing the new scales in pamphlet form, and in other ways, is endeavouring to bring the advantages of the new facilities under the eyes of persons interested. I will quote one feature. The Company (like the South-Western) carries big loads, by goods train, at rates reduced in proportion to bulk, and, in order to make the rates operative, it allows the consignments to be mixed. For instance, a consignment of 3 tons, consisting of 1 ton of Fresh Meat, 1 ton of Butter, and 1 ton of Apples, would be carried at the low scale for 3-ton lots, instead of at the higher rates for 1-ton lots. The actual charges per ton on such a consignment, if the distance were, say, 100 miles, would be : Meat, 24s. 2d. per ton, instead of 27s. 11d. ; Butter, 18s. 9d. per ton, instead of 21s. 3d. ; Apples, 15s. per ton, instead of 15s. 10d. Thus you may get your meat carried 100 miles at about one-tenth of a penny per lb., which does not leave much room for angry recriminations by Producers. The Great Western also allows mixed consignments in the case of the small parcels carried by passenger train, and has recently arranged to carry Cider and Perry at the reduced rates on Apples and Pears. Under this scale Apples and Pears are conveyed in 10-cwt. lots for 300 miles at a rate of 30s. per ton, and in 3-ton lots for 26s. 3d. per ton ; including delivery within the ordinary free cartage boundary. A lengthy recital of rates would be tedious,



or I could go on to quote many other instances of generosity on the part of both South-Western and Great Western, which tend to make much of the railway agitation look foolish.

The South-Eastern and the Chatham and Dover have also a special interest, as they were selected for attack before the Royal Commission on Agriculture in respect of their Foreign trade. Mr. William Forbes, the Chatham Company's Traffic Manager, told me bluntly that his Company has not followed, and does not mean to follow, in the footsteps of the Great Eastern or the other advanced Companies. He does not believe that the cult of the small consignor is a desirable thing—for his Railway, at any rate—and he expressed some scepticism as to its benefits to any Company, or even to the consumer; while as for the Farmers and their methods, he could only shrug his shoulders in despair. Still, his Company has taken a slight part in the new movement, and has issued a revised list of rates for Dairy Produce in small consignments, which roughly approximate to those of the other Companies: and little hope is entertained at Victoria concerning its virtues. The Company wants big consignments, and would then be prepared to offer rates to correspond; and it is waiting for those consignments to come along, before putting itself to the trouble of calculating scales. Then the South-Eastern has made a decided effort to benefit the Agriculturist. In the Spring of '96 it invited representatives of Agriculture on its system to discuss Railway Rates, and, as a result, rates were reduced in the following July by 15 per cent. on fruit and vegetables. Similar reductions were also inaugurated in the carriage of Cattle, Food, and Packed Manure in 6-ton lots; while the reduction in Hops to London and in Stable Manure in 6-ton lots amounted to 25 per cent. Mr. Light, the South-Eastern Goods

Manager, tells me that he thinks these reduced rates have given an impulse to agricultural traffic, but he, too, is hopeless of the Farmer's capacity for combination.

To find out what was doing among the Northern Lines I inquired of the North-Western and the North-Eastern Companies. The former, characteristically, and, I think, unfortunately, does not base its rates on published lists, but, as announced in its posters, offers to make private and separate arrangements for the conveyance of large or small quantities of Agricultural Produce with any consignor who cares to apply for a rate. This offer has so far been almost barren of result: notwithstanding that the rates, both for small consignments by passenger train and for larger consignments by goods train, which the North-Western quotes when it is asked, are low, even when compared to the new rates granted by other Companies. This Company, it is worth noting, has abolished the distinctions between half-ton and three-ton lots. Here is an instance of its rates. It will carry Meat by goods train a distance of 100 miles for 23s. 4d. a ton; while by passenger train it is prepared to carry a cwt. of Dairy Produce the same distance for 2s. 3d., including delivery. The North-Eastern, though it will not touch the small-consignment business, issued, in August last, some 'Experimental Scales' for the carriage of all sorts of Agricultural Produce, Food-stuffs, Manures, etc., *in bulk*. It insists on 5-ton consignments, that is, truck loads, and any odd tons over five or its multiple are charged at the ordinary tonnage rate outside the reduced scale, which is 2s. 6d. per ton for the first eight miles, and—I skip the intermediate scales—12s. 1d. per ton for 197-206 miles. But on ordinary Manure and Gas-lime, the rate is yet lower, ranging from 1s. per ton for the first ten miles to 3s. 9d.

per ton for 99-102 miles. The rates are 'station to station' rates, that is to say, they do not include terminal services or delivery. The North-Eastern has also issued an elaborate 'Experimental Scale' for live stock. All these 'experiments' are due to terminate on December 1st next, and to judge from the desponding tone of the Goods Manager's communications to me, the termination is not likely to be postponed.

In respect to Ireland I made inquiries of the Great Southern and Western Company. That Company has issued a schedule of rates for the carriage of Dairy and Garden Produce by passenger train, which bears a general resemblance to the small-consignment rates issued by the English Companies. It is, however, extended to consignments of 100 lb., but the charges do not include delivery in Dublin, for which additional, but not very heavy, charges are made. It is to be hoped that with the development of Co-operative Agriculture in Ireland the Irish Companies will see their way to further generosity. Irish railways, they should remember, have been special offenders in the matter of rates, and have a lot of lee-way to make up. I believe the Welsh local Railway Companies have also been doing something of late for their agriculturists, but I am unable to say what: the Cambrian Company, to whose headquarters I applied, not having granted the information for which I asked.

#### *Reform in the Farmyard.*

The response to this forward movement has been mixed in character. The Great Eastern reports most encouragingly. The Liverpool Street authorities informed me recently that they were then carrying about 6,000 boxes a month by passenger train, and that they were confident that the new arrangements had already

done much to encourage the small farming industries (Poultry, Eggs, and the like) in the districts served. They also courteously sent me extracts from their agents' reports, which are to the same effect. Here is one (it refers to Cut Flowers): 'Mr. Quinn has had this week to return 30s. to thirty different people through being unable to meet all his demands, although he has grown between one and two acres of flowers. Last year at this time, with only about half the quantity, the flowers stood and spoilt.' Here is another:—'Since the list started these people have been hard at work to meet the demands; as it is, the demand is larger than the supply.' And here is an extract from a letter by a farmer's wife:—'I have despatched over £40 worth of produce to private houses in London, sending more than 100 boxes. The rearing and dressing of the poultry I have done entirely by myself, and the profit is satisfactory. Very few eggs get broken.' But from other Companies I get less rosy accounts, and the general impression is one of failure. The North-Western Company, for example, two years ago sent out canvassers among the Agriculturists on its system to find out what rates would lead to a larger traffic, and producers were told that if they would send 2-ton loads they would get specially low rates. Very little came of the offer, but it was afterwards renewed. Altogether 1,000 farmers were interviewed, and here is the official summary of the result:—'Very few in favour of combination. More than half the farmers interviewed showed absolute indifference in the matter, with the exception of some who wanted lower rates under present conditions. The lack of interest was partly accounted for by the farmers' practice of selling at their market towns, which they reached by road, partly also to the practice of selling to middlemen who visit the districts and pay the railway charges. Of all the farmers

tapped by the London and North-Western, less than 400 have so far availed themselves of the Company's offer to arrange special rates, and it is significant that of this number the greater part have asked for quotations by passenger train, that is for small consignments. The South-Western Company instituted a similar investigation, and its results confirmed the experience of the North-Western.

The position at present, then, is that when a Railway Company likes to cultivate the small consignment, it succeeds; but that when it stresses the mutual profitability of large consignments, it fails. Now, it is not in the individual Farmer's power to market large regular consignments. The sending of such consignments, therefore, involves the combination of a whole district, and they *will not combine*. Railway men have told me of efforts to make them (quite supererogatory work, too; a railway company's business is not the organization of rural industry): but these efforts have proved unavailing. 'Why should Farmer Jenkins know all about my business?' angrily queries Farmer Giles. And so Farmer Jenkins and Farmer Giles and all their neighbours continue to pack (and pack abominably) their own little oddments for market; they turn up at the station at all sorts of odd times with these oddments, which are usually very awkward to handle without damage; and generally the Railway Company is put to an infinite deal of trouble for a very small profit, despite the higher rates. And, because of these higher rates, Farmer Giles and the rest punch the ground with their ash-plants, and affirm that they will stand this railway imposition no longer; or (less vigorously minded) they submit in silence, and gradually decrease the extent of their unprofitable cultivation. With the British Farmer and his sturdy independence patience is difficult.

There is absolutely nothing for it but Combination. Looked at from any point of view, this reform shows as vital. Take the sea-competition argument of the Railway Companies as an example. Unless certain of the Companies carry Imported Produce at very low rates, they do not carry it at all; it comes to London by water. The Companies cannot use this argument as a legal defence of the rates; yet sea-competition is a fact. The Chatham and Dover gave low rates to Foreign Hops, and were forced to abandon their trade at the complaint of the English Farmer; but this was no real victory for him: the hops come to London just the same; only they come by water all the way and at an even lower freight than the Preferential Railway Rate, so that he is at a greater disadvantage than ever. The mere stopping, therefore, of Preferential Rates is not enough. *Our producers must send their produce in a fashion which will reduce the railway cost to a minimum: only so can they get low enough rates to be effective against the Foreigner.* For, after all, Railway Companies in this country are ordinary, unsubsidized profit-making associations, and you will not get them to carry traffic under conditions necessarily unprofitable to themselves. We may regret that our railways were not nationalized half a century ago, when the matter was under serious consideration; but before the British Farmer can now demand railway nationalization or subsidies after the Continental pattern he must convince the country that he has done his part towards cheapening transport. And that he will not do until he combines to send regularly truck loads and train loads of well-packed produce after the manner of Importers.

A word more on the question of packing. The British Farmer's sins in this regard must be apparent to readers of my section on the Southampton Docks Case. Let me

supplement what I then said by a reference to the packing of Fruit, for in the Fruit Business proper packing is a prime essential; and in this matter our people are, *of course*, far behind the Foreigner. Mr. George Monro, of Covent Garden, stated, at the Crystal Palace Fruit Show in '94, that English Fruit-Growers were getting worse instead of better. He also said (it sounds well-nigh incredible, but Mr. Monro is an authority) that 'although we have continually improved where there is no competition, we have degenerated to a great extent where there is, and have so far played into the foreigners' hands, who study the requirements of the trade, and try in every possible way to meet them.' If this statement be true, Heaven help the British fruit-grower! But Mr. Monro and Mr. Archibald Weir (to whom I referred in my section on Fruit) have helped reform by inventing suitable boxes, and giving sensible advice as to the proper packing of fruit. Mr. Weir tells of a case in which he got, on fruit marketed by himself and properly packed, exactly double the return earned by a neighbouring grower, who followed the bad old methods. As it is, Mr. Weir says that shopkeepers frankly declare their preference for Foreign Fruit, which is packed in convenient barrels and cases, easy to handle, and certain to contain evenly graded fruit in fair condition. Yet the natural advantage is all on the side of the English grower, whose Fruit, moreover, has no sea-voyage to make, and a shorter railway journey.

#### *The Moral.*

The more one considers this question of Transport in its bearing on British Agriculture, the more firmly is one convinced that Agriculture, for her salvation, needs two great reforms: Co-operation and Protection. The com-

parative conditions of the Dairying Industry at home and abroad show how vitally necessary is Co-operation in production ; and the circumstances of railway carriage (made specially conspicuous in the Southampton Docks Case) prove that Co-operation is not less necessary in Distribution, particularly including Transport, for only so can low rates be secured. But the lowest rates which the combined intelligence and public spirit of Companies and consignors could achieve would not suffice to keep out big Foreign Imports. Water carriage is so cheap that foreign produce can be landed for an almost nominal freight charge ; and Cobden's argument of ' natural protection ' in the cost of carriage to the foreigner has proved in fact to be perhaps the most unsubstantial of all his unsubstantialities. The Protection of which modern mechanical invention has robbed the English farmer must be restored to him by the re-imposition of the Protection of which Cobden robbed him : that is, there must be a reasonable Tariff Duty on Foreign Produce for the Home Market. Many considerations urge the wisdom of this course : none more strongly than a consideration of Transport.

#### LIGHT RAILWAYS.

##### *Abroad.*

' For years past the spirit of enterprise and progress has directed itself almost exclusively to the extension and improvement of main lines of railways. It is true that the number of roads and canals has been increased, and that their construction has been improved, but there have been no changes, or almost none, in the manner in which traffic has been conducted on these lines of communication. Old-fashioned waggons continue to



travel on the high-roads, and whereas the price of carriage for long distances has enormously decreased, it costs as much as, if not more than, it did half a century ago to cart a load of wheat. It is the function of local railways to improve this state of things. Constructed, as a general rule, on the existing roads, and, in consequence, more economically than main railway lines, operated with the greatest economy, and by means of cheap rolling stock, they will furnish the people with the means of transporting their products at the lowest possible price. By means of their junctions with the main railway lines, they will render access to them more convenient both for passengers and for goods. They will assist communication from village to village, and from village to the adjacent station. They will call into being new industries, by affording them new outlets for their products. Finally, they will enable the farmer to procure at a cheap rate the fertilizers necessary to enable him to face foreign competition, and by the low cost of carriage will open to him markets of his own country, as well as those abroad.\*

The above is a nutshell statement of the case for Light Railways—fairly true on the whole, and convincing, if a bit enthusiastic—put forward by the National Association of Local Railways of Belgium. Now, Belgium affords to-day perhaps the best instance of the capacity for development of Light Railways. In July, '94, after nearly 9 years' experiment, there were in that country 75 Light Railways, ranging in length from about 1 mile to 34½ miles. Of this number half a dozen small lines belong to private companies, the rest to the National Society. Considering the small size of the country, this represents substantial progress. These

\* From a document issued by the Belgian National Society of Local Railways.

lines are, compared with the big railways, very inexpensive affairs. They are built on a narrow gauge, and cheaply. On the Antwerp and Turnhout Railway, which may be taken as an illustration (it is a line of  $34\frac{1}{2}$  miles length), the land only cost £199 per mile, and the cost of buildings spread out to £215 per mile. The working is as economical as the construction. On the rolling-stock for the Antwerp and Turnhout Line only £21,787 was expended, equivalent to £640 a mile. The total capital subscribed amounted to £85,920, equal to £2,527 per mile. The annual working expenses on the Belgian Light Railways generally have been reduced to about £11 5s. per mile, and it is said that a train can be run comfortably for 7d. or 8d. a mile.\* As these railways are only wanted to earn a minimum dividend for self-support, it follows that the rates charged are very low. On the fast trains the tariff is arranged as follows: (1) a fixed rate for all distances of  $6\frac{3}{4}$ d. per 2 cwt.; (2) a variable rate per half-mile of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per 2 cwt. These fast trains are specially valuable to market-gardeners; they are arranged for the gardeners' convenience, and contain vans specially constructed for the carriage of fruit and vegetables in baskets. For traffic in slow trains (which is specially adapted to the more bulky goods) there is a yet lower tariff. It is divided into two classes, for goods under and over 5 tons respectively. Let me quote the lighter class rates:

1. A fixed rate for all distances	...	5d. per ton.
2. Loading and unloading	...	10d. per ton.
3. A variable rate per half-mile	...	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per ton.

A charge of 3d. a consignment is made for registration, etc. One is not surprised to learn that agriculture, market-gardening, beet-cultivation, and stone-quarrying have made rapid progress under the stimulus of such

\* See Mr. J. C. Mackay's book on 'Light Railways.'

rates as these, particularly when it is remembered that the Light Railway comes practically to the consignor's door—is as a fact often brought right on to his fields. All the Belgian Light Lines are used for passengers as well as goods, while school season-tickets and cheap workmen's weekly tickets and other advantages form a useful addition to the country's method of conveyance.

It is a noteworthy feature of these Railways that, notwithstanding their vicinity to road traffic and the lack of those elaborate safeguards to which ordinary railways are accustomed, accidents are rare. In '93 there was no accident on any of the Belgian Light Lines from collision or derailment, and only a few casualties caused by the clumsiness or foolishness of drunken or careless passengers.

The great majority of the Belgian Light Railways are financed as follows: the State and the Province find about 28 per cent. each of the money, the commune about 40 per cent. more, and private persons usually about 5 per cent. only. The State also helps by the remission of rates and taxes. These Lines are a commercial success, to the extent that (under the management of the Society) they pay their way and a small dividend to boot on all their capital. I have no later figures than '93 (up to which year the dividends had been steadily growing), but in that year the State got 2·79 per cent. on its capital, the communes 2·73, and private individuals 3·88, the average all-round dividend being 2·80 per cent.

But Belgium does not stand alone. Other European countries have become, or are fast becoming, a veritable network of Light Railways, and the mesh extends to the remotest Italian and Hungarian plains. In every country, save France, they are an undoubted success. In every country, too, save Holland, they have been con-

structed chiefly out of public funds. Yet Holland has not apparently suffered from her dependence on the private capitalist (whose enterprise has been stimulated by communal subsidies), and her Light Railways (which are worked by the big railway companies) are a commercial success, besides having a perceptible influence for good on the industrial development of the districts which they serve. France's lack of success needs a word of explanation. The case against Light Railways in France is ably put by Mr. Warburton, the British Consul at La Rochelle, in his report to the Foreign Office.\* The troubles he relates are too long for detailed repetition, but the chief points are the somewhat reckless lavishness of the State (which provides half the cost of construction), combined with the desire of each Department to get its share of the State money, and to the easy terms of repayment granted to the Departments in respect of their half of the cost; to the foregoing add the practice of making the contractor work the Line and subscribe a quarter of the capital. The Guarantee system is also responsible for much. Under this system the State and the Department make up to the lessee any deficiency in a certain minimum receipt; and that sort of thing is deadly to enterprise. Further, the Lines only run from point to point, and do not have feeders on to the farms, with the result that the farmers are not enabled to dispense with their horses and waggons, and, as so many of them are content to sell their produce in the neighbouring market town, the Light Railway is not so extensively used as is needful for success: and agriculture provides practically the sole traffic. On the other hand, instances may be quoted of French Light Railways which have paid for themselves, besides aiding industry in their

\* Reports from Her Majesty's Representatives Abroad on Light Railways (C. 7558), 1894.

districts; and in many cases the main lines of railway are the richer for their light feeders. On the whole, therefore, the French Light Railway system serves the purpose of a useful warning and corrective. It is not really an argument against Light Railways, but it reminds us that they, as much as other industrial undertakings, require the statesmanship of business to be brought to their construction and management. Without this warning from France one would be tempted, by the glowing accounts which come from all other parts of Europe, to assume that a Light Railway is bound to be a success any way, apart from the circumstances of its construction.

There is no need to go into detail through the Light Railway systems of every country. Suffice it to say that, though Belgium leads the way, most of the other countries follow at no great distance. They, too, have solved the problem of cheap railway construction, it being estimated that, taking all Europe, the cost of Light Railways would work out to an average of about £4,000 a mile. With equal success have they solved the auxiliary, but all-important, problem of cheap freight, and the Belgian rates which I quoted may be taken as typical. I will just quote the rates in operation on a German line, the Altena to Ludenscheid: goods of all kinds pay 1½d. per ton per mile, with 2d. per ton for transshipment; passengers pay 1½d. a mile first class, and ¾d. per mile third class.\*

*At Home.*

It must be a matter of surprise to our Continental neighbours that we should be so backward in the construction of Light Railways. The principal reasons I take to be: (1) the comparatively close network of

\* 'Light Railways,' by J. C. Mackay, p. 154.

ordinary railways with which England is covered; (2) the discouragement of the Legislature and Board of Trade. England in the matter of Railways is a much-governed country; Regulation of Railway Acts abound, and the Board of Trade rules for ensuring safety in working are intricate, and expensive to carry out.\* Moreover, the lawyers and the Parliamentary agents (favoured by the cumbrous methods in vogue for obtaining a Parliamentary charter for a new line) suck deeply from the funds which capitalists provide for railway construction. There is also the State's negative discouragement: until last year no powers existed for State or Municipal support to Light Railway schemes.

Yet the United Kingdom has not utterly lacked Light Railways. Certain districts of Ireland have been favoured, and I think I am justified in using this word, notwithstanding the very partial success of the Irish Lines. True, owing to an over-elaborate scale of construction, and the placing of the management in the hands of local people who could scarce be deemed experts, the Lines have not been a financial triumph; but those acquainted with the districts which they serve make no doubt as to the benefit their presence has proved to the industry of the country; and in places even 'Bloody Balfour's' tyranny is forgotten in gratitude for the Light Railways with whose initiation his name is so prominently associated.

Among the occasional attempts in the direction of Light Railways in England I may name the little Welsh mountain railroads, which are running successfully. Also the Wisbeach and Upwell Line, belonging to the Great Eastern Company. Though on the standard gauge this Line is constructed cheaply. It runs (un-

\* There was an Act passed in '68 for the facilitating of Light Railways, but it did not facilitate enough to be of practical use.

fenced) alongside the public road; the permanent way is without bottom ballast, and there are no telegraph wires or stations, the trains stopping anywhere *en route* to pick up passengers, and tickets are served out in the trains. The passenger carriages are like ordinary tram-cars, and the goods waggons are the same as are used on the main line. The average speed is eight miles an hour, the maximum ten. The first-class fare is  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a mile, the third  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Then there is the Wantage Line, running partly alongside the public road, from Wantage to Wantage Road Station, a distance of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. This little Line also carries passengers tramway fashion, and main line goods waggons; and it pays fairly well. The Southwold Line is also frequently quoted as an instance of Light Railways in England. It needs, however, to be quoted as a warning as well as an example; for it cost £8,000 a mile to construct (£8,500 including rolling-stock), which is at least twice what a proper Light Railway should cost. The capital is heavy and the Line pays no dividend, its net earnings per mile—£70—being used up in interest on loans and debentures. Otherwise it is all right. Mr. J. C. Mackay, the author of 'Light Railways,' says that it has very materially developed its district. At any rate it is well used, a recent return showing the number of passengers during the year to have been 87,252, and the tonnage of goods and live stock 9,033 tons. It is nearly 9 miles long, and is one of the 'little' lines, being constructed on a 3 foot gauge.

But the few experiments in this country are not sufficient to upset the statement that England is a country without Light Railways. Yet the need for them is apparent: notwithstanding the crowded tangle of lines which a railway map of the country represents, there are in one county alone 324,000 acres of cultivated land which have

no railway within three miles.\* Naturally, with the successful examples of other countries before their eyes, the agriculturists of England—or rather some of them, for so many are indifferent—have in recent years become keenly alive to the advantages of a Light Railway system, and in the fulness of time—there was assuredly no haste displayed—the late President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Bryce, summoned a Conference to talk the subject over. In the following Session ('95) he introduced a Bill for facilitating the construction of Light Railways. But the Bill was a thin one; the Government seemed to take but little interest in it, and it had not got beyond the second reading debate stage when the Dissolution of Parliament put an end to it.

But the new Administration lost no time in introducing a new Bill, and this became the Light Railways Act, 1896. This Act boldly adopts the Continental principle of State and local assistance. It empowers the County, Borough, and District Councils to construct or work, or to contract for the construction and working of Light Railways, or to advance money to a Light Railway Company by way of loan, or as part of the Company's share capital. Also, where such County, Borough, or District Council advance a loan to a Light Railway Company, the Treasury may likewise agree to advance a sum not exceeding a quarter of the total amount required for the Railway, and not exceeding the amount advanced by the Council. State aid may go even farther. The Act provides that in cases where the making of a Light Railway would benefit agriculture in the district, or would provide a necessary means of communication between a fishing village or harbour and a market, or would develop and maintain some definite industry, and

\* See Mr. Ritchie's speech in the House of Commons on introducing his Light Railways Bill, February 20, 1896.



where also, owing to the exceptional circumstances of the district, a Light Railway could not be constructed without special assistance from the State, but an existing Company is prepared to construct and work the Railway if it can get the money, the Treasury may make a special advance of public money towards the construction of the Railway. Before, however, such advance can be made the Treasury must be satisfied that landowners, local authorities, and other persons interested have, by the free grant of land or otherwise, given all reasonable assistance and facilities in their power for the construction of the Railway. This special advance must not exceed one half of the sum required for the construction of the Railway. The total amount which the Treasury may advance must not at any one time exceed one million pounds, and of this amount not more than a quarter of a million sterling may be expended on special advances. I need not relate in detail the machinery which the Light Railway Act provides for the purpose of constructing Light Railways; suffice it to say that the proceedings for obtaining powers to construct such Railways are made much simpler and much cheaper than in the case of ordinary Railways. The Act, indeed, is a most valuable one, and the only exception which can be taken to it is the provision (inserted when the Bill was in Committee) that 10 per cent. shall be added to the price of land compulsorily purchased. Surely the full market price ought to be sufficient to compensate landowners for giving up strips of land for the benefit of agricultural and other industries in their districts. The course of events since the passage of the Act has also brought to light another slight defect. The Act does not provide against tramway Companies seeking to establish their undertakings under the Light Railways Act, instead of under the Tramways Act of 1870, to which such under-

takings properly belong : and already there are instances of advantage being taken of the omission ; a tramway, for instance, from Ramsgate to Margate is not the sort of aid to Agriculture which the Light Railways Act was framed to provide. A worse misuse of the Act has just come to light : the Court of Common Council of London is (as these pages go to press) about to apply for power to construct a Light Railway to connect the Foreign Cattle Market at Deptford with the Brighton and South Coast Railway. Thus the Act is to be used for facilitating foreign competition with the English farmer ! I trust the Commissioners will reject the application.

It is early yet to prophesy the success of Light Railways in England under the recent Parliamentary stimulus. So far, however, there has not been the rush on Light Railway schemes which enthusiastic advocates doubtless expected would immediately follow the passing of the Act. The first session only saw twenty-eight proposals in all brought before the Light Railway Commissioners ; and in this number are included, as I have indicated, several schemes which, however useful they may be in themselves, can scarcely be regarded as ' Aids to Agriculture.' But England is a Conservative country, and one must not argue failure from the fact that it is somewhat slow at first to respond to the legislative invitation. And there have since been several additions to the first list of applications.

A word of warning in conclusion : Light Railway promoters must not expect purely agricultural lines to be commercially successful unless those lines lead to a town of some importance. In that case they may, and should be, financial successes ; otherwise they must be regarded simply as aids to the industry of their districts, and from that point of view worth supporting, without much ulterior hope of dividends.

## VII.

*AGRICULTURAL BANKS.*

IN the course of the preceding pages I have incidentally referred to Agricultural Banks. These institutions—‘Made in Germany’—have proved of such immense benefit to the peasant cultivators of Europe, that this book would be incomplete unless I made special mention of them, and advocated their establishment in this country. True, the conditions of agriculture with us are different: on the Continent the small cultivator is the rule, and with us the exception; and it is the small cultivator to whom Agricultural Banks are a particular boon. Yet we have the small cultivator with us also; and a large number of British and Irish—particularly Irish—farmers are in a sufficiently humble way of business to appreciate the easy access to small loans which Agricultural Banks afford, as is proved by the fact that the greater portion of bills of sale in agricultural districts are for sums not exceeding £30. Moreover, the small cultivator is likely to increase in the land. Apart from the extension of allotments, there is the growth of small rural industries, such as poultry farming. Moreover, anything that can increase the number of small holdings is worthy of earnest support; for thus only can the people be brought back to the land, and the rural labouring classes kept on it, and given a chance of raising themselves from the condition of hopeless poverty which is the agricultural labourer’s present lot.

*The Rival Systems.*

If you mix among Co-operators and mention the subject of People’s Banks, you will in all probability find yourself

involved in a stormy controversy. For these institutions take various forms, and their respective champions are very acrid when they discuss the merits of the others. I shall not enter into this discussion. Suffice it to say that People's Banks on the Continent are divided into two main groups, known (by their founders' names) as the Schulze-Delitzsch and the Raiffeisen. As the former system mostly prevails in towns, and has no special connexion with Agriculture (though its operations do extend to the peasantry), I will only attempt a very brief synopsis of it. Herr Schulze started his first 'Credit Association' in 1850, but it was a philanthropic institution, 'supplied with funds by members who did not themselves expect to become borrowers.'\* But in a couple of years he abandoned philanthropy, and went in boldly for Co-operation. This is not the place to tell the history of his labours; anyone desirous of reading Herr Schulze's magnificent struggles, triumphantly issuing in the foundation of a huge system of popular banking, should consult the book from which I have just quoted, and the Proceedings of the First International Congress held in London in '95.† I can only give a bare outline of the purpose of these Banks. In effect, then, they are really Savings Banks, rather than Associations for granting credit. They have a share capital, only one share being allotted to each member; but the amount of this share is somewhat considerable, the system of payment by instalments being introduced to accommodate the poor man. Thus you get a body of shareholders whose interests as shareholders have come to occupy a foremost place. The borrowers' interest is made subsidiary to the shareholding members; and so high rates of interest,

\* 'People's Banks,' by Henry W. Wolff, p. 40.

† First International Co-operative Congress, published by the International Co-operative Alliance, London.

-ranging to 30 per cent., are charged to borrowers; even 56½ per cent. has been known! \* So, also, big dividends are earned for the members, and these are sometimes as high as 30 per cent., though, on the other hand, owing to the ordinary speculative banking business in which the Banks engage, the attempt to make profit overshoots itself, and the Association becomes a positive failure. The many friends of the Schulze-Delitzsch system point with pride to its huge ramifications, and claim that it has been of untold benefit to the working classes. The claim must be admitted, even after admitting also the statements as to failure made by the controversial advocates of opposing systems. Nevertheless, these banks are not of much direct interest to Agriculture. By providing a good investment for a poor man's savings they may be of indirect interest, and by affording the small agriculturist in need of money a means of getting it without resorting to the usurer, they are also to a certain degree (and in so far as they are not themselves usurious) a direct aid to Agriculture. But it could only be to a small degree; for a cardinal principle of the Schulze-Delitzsch Bank is to loan money always on short credit; and a cardinal want of the needy agriculturist is long credit. Aid to Agriculture, by providing the poor agriculturist with credit and capital, can only be a subsidiary work of the Schulze-Delitzsch Banks; and we may therefore turn from their consideration to the great rival, or, at least, alternative system, known by the name of its founder, Herr Raiffeisen.

*The Raiffeisen Bank.*

This Bank is purely a borrowers' institution. Herr Raiffeisen, a burgomaster in the Westerwald, was shocked at the misery existing among the peasants

\* 'People's Banks,' p. 98.

around him in consequence of the usury of which they were victims. In '46 and '47 the wretchedness from this cause prevalent in his own neighbourhood roused him to discover a remedy. He began with a co-operative bakery and a co-operative cattle-purchase association, but soon turned his thoughts to finance, and in '49 established his first Loan Bank. It was a success, and Herr Raiffeisen—Father Raiffeisen the people called him—devoted the rest of his life, which closed in '88, to multiplying these Loan Banks throughout the country. And now Raiffeisen Banks are firmly established all over agricultural Germany, and have in recent years obtained a footing in other countries, either on the same model or in some adapted form.

The Raiffeisen Bank is essentially a local affair; it depends for its success upon the proved character of the members composing it, and it is necessary that the members should be personally known to each other. For the foundation of the system is personal credit. There are no shares in a Raiffeisen Bank, the idea being that the Association shall obtain money for loaning out to agriculturists on the personal security of its members. In the attainment of this object there is room for the aid of wealthy people, who, though not likely to need a loan themselves, may yet join the Association, and by the help of their means and credit make it easier for the Bank to borrow from ordinary banks the funds necessary for lending money to needy members. This help of the rich, however, though obviously valuable, is not inherently necessary. Neither is a Raiffeisen Bank necessarily dependent for all time on borrowed money. It is also a deposit savings-bank, and from this source, as well as from the profits it may make in the banking business (which go to the accumulation of a reserve), it obtains funds of its own for the conduct of loaning operations.

In making a loan the following principles are observed. The loan is given only to members of the Association, and these are carefully selected: in a small village everyone knows everyone else, and the lazy and drunken and shiftless are not accepted as members; though poverty, even extreme poverty, is no bar. The poor man has of course no security (in the ordinary banking acceptation of the word) to offer; that is the *raison d'être* of the Raiffeisen Bank: the borrower's own *character*, backed by his simple note of hand, is the only security. But the Bank demands that the borrower shall state the specific purpose for which he wants the money, and that purpose must be the purchase of cattle, seed, or manures, the prosecution of some needed work of fencing and irrigation, or some other legitimate expenditure on the industry in which the borrower is engaged, or intends to engage. If he misapplies the loan—and in a rural neighbourhood his fellow Bank members soon become aware of this—the money is promptly called in. An important feature of the Raiffeisen Bank, as distinguished from the Schulze-Delitzsch, is that the loans are granted for long terms, ten years being by no means uncommon. This is necessary, for money expended on rural industry is not as a rule immediately remunerative. If a man, for example, plants fruit-tree saplings, he will not get his money back on the sale of the fruit until several years afterwards. Then the rate of interest charged is very low; indeed, the lending of money at a low rate of interest is the *fons et origo* of the Raiffeisen Bank. There are no shareholders greedy for dividends, and there is consequently no temptation to extort a high rate of interest.

The above is a brief sketch of the Raiffeisen Bank, an institution which has wrought immense benefit to the rural districts of Europe into which it has penetrated.

Everywhere they have been a success. As one of their advocates proudly relates, 'millions of money have been lent, mostly to poor people, and not a farthing ever lost.' There are witnesses in plenty to aver that under the benign influence of these Banks the whole aspect of the countryside has been changed: grinding poverty has given place to decent comfort, the soil is tilled and made fruitful as never before, and the moral condition of the population has improved in corresponding measure. For membership of a Raiffeisen Bank implies a respectable life, and besides encouraging thrift and industry, heavily discourages drunkenness and gambling and vagabondage. Testimony to the good thus wrought comes from all parts of Europe. From Servia we learn of *cafés* closing their doors because the villagers have ceased to spend their time over liquor and cards; from Germany we have the assertion of ministers of religion that the Banks have done much more to reform the people, and set them in a decent way of living, than all the ghostly ministrations which the Church could offer. Why should the United Kingdom be deprived of a like institution? The thing surely does not need argument; it must be manifest that the establishment of Agricultural Banks throughout the country could not but prove of incalculable benefit to our decayed rural industries. The Agricultural Bank is a form of Co-operation worthy to rank on a level with associations for co-operative production and co-operative sale.

*Their Beginning Here.*

But though one cannot say that the Agricultural Bank has established itself yet in these Islands, it is possible, happily, to chronicle the birth of the system. There is an Agricultural Banks Association at work in England — 'missionary work' its chairman, Mr. Yerburch, M.P., calls it. And it has not been spared the opposition which



is the normal incident of the missionary's life. The British mind, Mr. Yerburgh has discovered, boggles at the principle of 'unlimited liability'; it is to be hoped that education and experiment will convince the British mind that in practice there is nothing to fear. With the exercise of reasonable care to exclude the untrustworthy, there is no danger that the black sheep will ever be numerous enough to imperil the solvency of the honest members. As a fact, 'unlimited credit,' so far from being a bogey, is in many points of view the surest guarantee of the Bank's stability. The Association's labours only date back about three years; so that it is not surprising, in face of the farmers' customary torpor and his suspicion of the Bank's cardinal principle, coupled with the absence of interest in the reform among most of those whose public spirit is usually the motive-power in social work, that at present the record of the Association is more one of promise than one of achievement. Yet something positive has already been accomplished. Nine Agricultural Banks, modelled generally on the Raiffeisen system, have begun operations at Scawby in Lincolnshire, at Pembury in Kent, at Laxfield in Suffolk, at Hedge End and Shillingstone in Dorset, at Castlemorton in Worcestershire, at Wiggshall St. Mary in Norfolk, at Cattenham in Cambridgeshire, and at Rottingdean in Sussex; and, at the time of writing, two are being formed at Normanton in Derbyshire, and at Claydon in Bucks. Their members consist chiefly of small farmers, tradesmen, artisans, labourers, allotment holders, and market gardeners, who have, as need arose, obtained loans for the purchase of horses and other live stock, iron (to be made up by a blacksmith), carts, manure, trade utensils, seeds, and building materials. The amount of the loans which the Banks are prepared to grant differ in each case, Laxfield's varying between 30s. and £6, while

Pembury's minimum is £6, the maximum being £50. Thus is already evidenced the accommodating character of Agricultural Banks: where the farmers are in a fairly large way, and need bigger loans, the Bank can do bigger business, its borrowing powers being proportioned to the financial status of its members; where, on the other hand, the special need of the district is to give working men a chance to establish themselves as small cultivators, the circle of the Bank's operations can dwindle to correspond. A satisfactory and significant feature of these pioneer banks is that so far no difficulty has been experienced in the punctuality of repayment, except in the case of one bank, which finds the collection of money difficult during the winter.

The movement has spread to Ireland. This is no matter for wonder in view of the recent spread of other forms of Co-operative Agriculture. And here also the pioneer of the movement is the invaluable Irish Agricultural Organization Society. At the beginning of '95 the first Irish Agricultural Bank was started at Doneraile in the county of Cork. It set to work in a modest way, lending out small sums (the total up to the end of '95 only amounted to £174), and though members' deposits furnished the Bank with funds to the tune of £75, the rest was borrowed on the security of the members on the Raiffeisen principle. The money was lent at a low rate of interest, and only for productive purposes, or to effect an economy; and its application was carefully watched, so that in the event of misapplication it might be called in forthwith. The Bank is still working satisfactorily, and two or three others have by this time arisen to bear it company. As the Organization Society has appointed a special Bank Organizer, we may fairly hope for rapid growth in the near future. Their extension will mean a big step forward in Ireland's Regeneration.

## VIII.

*BURDENS ON THE LAND.*

THE English farmer is heavily handicapped in his struggle against foreign competition by reason of the heavy burdens which are placed on his land. His acres are more prolific than those of any other country, he has markets close at hand; yet he cannot profitably sell his produce except at a higher price than his competitor demands in the same market. English land is overburdened. Rent, Tithe, Imperial Taxation, and Local Taxation conspire to load the farm with a burden which is very grievous—sometimes too heavy to be borne.

*Rent.*

Rent is the chief burden; yet I should be travelling aside from my subject, or at least overweighting it, if I embarked here on a discussion of that thorny question. There are advocates in plenty who will tell you that the great burden on rural industry is the landlords' tax. I am not going to argue the point, though I will go so far with Land Reformers as to admit that the present system of land tenure in England is not an ideal system; that it is a debased and warped outcome of the feudal tenure, under which the lord of the manor was enjoined to supply police and road-repairing services in return for his privileges. But here I shall stop; my purpose is to suggest immediate practical remedies for the foreigners' encroachment on British Agriculture, not to write an academic treatise on the Social Revolution. Private property in land is a fact. Another pertinent fact is that rent is inherent; rent in one form or another must be paid to someone or another; it represents the margin of

profit on the land worth cultivating over that which is not worth cultivating. If the land were nationalized, its occupiers would have to pay rent in some shape to the State: as the land is not at present nationalized, the rent is paid to individuals. Its consideration, therefore, is best left out of our present discussion.

From this general statement, however, one exception must be made. The State has a right to demand that the landlord shall not exact from his tenants a larger rent than the land will bear—that is to say, the farmer must be protected against a rent which would preclude him from earning a fair profit by his farm. Without such protection, there is a danger that landlords may reap an undue advantage from State assistance to Agriculture. I do not say that the landlord is to be prevented from receiving any advantage from the agricultural prosperity which State assistance encourages. Still less do I follow the Liberal Party in its refusal to aid Agriculture because one result of such aid would be better times for landlords; that policy can best be characterized in the colloquial adage about cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Yet I do think that a case is made out for putting some check upon the powers (at present entirely unregulated) of landlords to fix rents as they please. The welfare of Agriculture and the peculiar character of the land monopoly alike demand the institution of this check. The obvious machinery required is the Land Court, and it cannot be established too soon. If it did nothing else, it would at least cut the ground from beneath the argument that all State relief of Agriculture is just a scheme for the relief of landlords. But it will do much more. Just as the Board of Trade and the Railway Commissioners' Court check exorbitant Railway rates, so a Land Court with proper powers will operate to check exorbitant rents. Under our modern

system landlords are practically pensioners on the land, and the Land Court will see that the pension is not so big as to eat up the profits of the land. In many cases landlords are more than pensioners, and spend money freely in improving the land ; those landlords are entitled to a fair rate of interest on their invested capital : the Land Court will see that such rate of interest is fair.

*Tithe.*

Here, again, I feel that I should be encumbering myself unduly were I to enter on a lengthened discussion respecting the justice of perpetuating Tithe. Yet a few words are necessary. In the days when the tax was first imposed our forefathers were all good Churchmen, and were untroubled by foreign competition. To-day even ardent Churchmanship is not customarily equal to subscribing towards Church funds a tenth of its possessor's income, more especially when that income is sorely straitened. And we *have* foreign competition. Moreover, the foreign competitor is not burdened with Tithe. In that respect alone he stands at an advantage with the Englishman ; it is an advantage which more than neutralizes, for example, the cost of transporting foreign produce to the English market. And it is a peculiarly unhappy fact that Tithe bears most heavily on just those parts of the country which are least able to support the burden. This anomaly arose from the circumstances of English Agriculture in 1834, when the Tithe was commuted. At that time the price of wheat was high, and the eastern and southern counties, the chief wheat districts, were the most prosperous ; their tithe was consequently fixed at much higher rates than were ordained for the pastoral counties. For example, the commutation for Essex was at an average of 6s. per acre of cultivated land, for Suffolk at an average of 5s. 3½d., for Hants at an average of

4s. 10d.; while Northamptonshire was let off with an average of 1s. 1½d., and Westmoreland with an average of 6½d. To use Sir Robert Giffen's illustration, for Essex alone the commuted tithe, amounting in 1834 to £251,000, was as great as that of Lancashire, Cumberland, Northumberland, Durham, Westmoreland, and Rutland combined. In some parishes in Essex the tithe was up to 8s. an acre.\*

These anomalies at any rate call for redress. The Tithe Act of 1891 was an attempt in this direction; but more is needed. Indeed, the '91 Act must be classed as a failure. It provides that where the tithe rent-charge exceeds two-thirds of the annual value of the land, the tithe-payer may apply to the County Court for an order to reduce the amount payable to two-thirds of the land's value; this value being the full value as assessed by the Income Tax Commissioners. The relief thus proffered is so slight that it is not thought worth the trouble and expense of the proceedings necessary to obtain it; the representative of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners said he had not heard of a single case in which the relief had been granted.† Surely the Legislature might without delay give the farmer something better than this miserable Act.

The ultimate aim of all legislation on Tithe should be the Tithe's complete elimination. It is not worth while to disturb a harmless antiquity; but true Conservatism demands the removal of the most hoary antiquity when it becomes an oppressive nuisance.

#### *Imperial Taxation.*

The student of British Agriculture is so accustomed to finding things awry and topsy-turvy that he is not

\* Royal Commission on Agriculture, Second Report, p. 24.

† *Ibid.*

surprised to learn that the Imperial Taxation on land in the year '94-95 amounted (apart from the new Death Duties) to 19·51d. in the pound on the annual value, while non-rateable property paid 14·41d. And of land the most heavily taxed is agricultural land; and of agricultural land that which lies in the area of the most acute Depression. The situation certainly calls for change.

Land Tax is the chief offender. According to the Act of 1692, under which it was imposed, 'every person, body politic and corporate, etc., having any estate in ready moneys, or in any debts owing to them, or having any estate in goods, wares, merchandise, or other chattels or personal estates whatsoever within this realm or without shall yield and pay unto their Majesties 4s. in the pound according to the true yearly value thereof.' The Act also imposed a duty of 4s. in the pound upon profits and salaries of persons holding offices, etc. Thus it is clear that the impost known as the Land Tax was not at its inception intended to burden agriculturists only. All classes of property and all sorts of incomes were meant to be subject to the tax. But the Act did not provide the adequate machinery for collecting the tax on personalty, and in that regard proved a failure; so much so that in 1833 the Land Tax on personalty was repealed. Common justice surely points to the entire repeal of the tax; but common justice is unfortunately not yet in the ascendant; and so the industry to-day that can least bear taxation is still burdened, whilst all others go free.

It is particularly worthy of remark that in the Act of 1692 incomes obtained from commerce *outside* this realm are included in the tax. At the present day, as our manufacturing classes know to their cost, Englishmen with money are prone to invest in undertakings abroad,

many of which are in direct competition with home industries. Yet incomes derived from these unpatriotic sources are relieved from their 4s. in the pound, whilst Agriculture, the great home industry, is still burdened with it. Surely, if any income is to be taxed it should, first and foremost, be that which is derived from foreign investments.

The inequalities of the Land Tax do not end here. Under the powers of the Act of 1798 a good deal of land has been redeemed from the Tax. Now the sums paid for such redemption go to reduce the National Debt, nearly thirty-one millions sterling having already been paid by landowners into the country's exchequer for this purpose. And the ordinary tax-payer is, therefore, to that extent relieved. Now, the lands on which the Tax is usually redeemed are just those lands which could most easily bear it. It is land which is about to be cut up into building plots, and so made richer, which is redeemed, and the redemption is effected on the basis of past contributions—that is to say, contributions on the land as agricultural land; but four shillings in the pound on the value two hundred years ago of agricultural land figures ridiculously small as an impost on land now swarming with houses. Then, too, what I have said above as to the unjust incidence of Tithe applies equally to Land Tax; its quota was fixed at a time when arable land brought big profits. *Now* arable land spells disaster; yet it is on arable land that the impost falls heaviest; nearly a quarter of the unredeemed Land Tax is exacted from Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Lincoln and Wilts — counties which had a heavy allocation when the quotas were fixed. Moreover, there has been no tempering of the wind of Agricultural Depression to the shorn acres; as the value of the land has fallen the tax upon it has risen.



Since the beginning of the Depression, for example, the Land Tax in one Essex parish has risen from 1s. 4½d. to 4s., in a Norfolk parish from 6½d. to 1s. 3½d., in a Suffolk parish from 1s. 0¾d. to 2s. 6d., in a Lincolnshire parish from 9¾d. to 2s. 3d., and in a Wiltshire parish from 1s. 1d. to 3s. The whole business has become such a stupid anomaly that the Government which swept it away would earn the thanks of all lovers of justice and logic and common-sense.

### *Local Taxation.*

It is almost superfluous to speak of the heaviness with which Local Taxation bears upon the land. Yet it is likely to press more heavily in the future than in the past. Rates in England and Wales increased from 16½ millions in '68 to £30,200,000 in '93; and in '93 the Parish Councils Act was passed, under which an additional rate of 6d. in the pound may be levied. It is still early to prophesy as to the expenditure of Parish Councils; but, judging from our experience so far, it is not likely that the rating powers will be neglected. Rates press more heavily upon agricultural land than upon dwelling-houses. As Sir G. C. Lewis pointed out, as long ago as 1850, the income of the occupier of a dwelling-house bears a larger proportion to the rent of that house than does a farmer's income to the rateable value of his farm. I am not contending that houses are under-rated. Far from it. But any hardship in the matter of rates which the occupier of a dwelling-house suffers is small in comparison with that which is inflicted upon the farmer. It is the difference between the tax upon consumption and the tax upon production. The farmer's land is his capital, very expensive capital, and capital which returns a very low rate of profit. Thus to tax industry is surely the falsest economy.

Something has been done to mitigate the evil in the Act of 1896 under which agricultural land is exempted from half the rates. There have also been other Imperial grants in relief of rates, but in respect of them it should not be forgotten that as the land contributes the largest proportional share of Imperial taxation, the subventions out of Imperial taxation to the relief of agricultural rates are to a substantial extent simply a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Further relief is urgently called for. Among the reforms suggested may be mentioned the following: (1) that the contribution from the Imperial revenue towards those objects of local administration which are national in character should be increased, or else that the administration should be transferred to the central authorities; (2) that the Land Tax should be handed over to the County Councils for aiding the local rates; (3) that land should be assessed only in proportion to the value of its products; (4) that the only parts of farms assessable to local rates should be farmhouses and buildings; (5) that agricultural lands should be assessed to all local rates at one-fourth of their valuation, a system already followed in respect of the General District Rate in Urban Districts, and to rates for special expenses in Rural Districts, and in Scotland in respect of certain other rates. All these suggestions are worthy of consideration. With regard to the first, education is an apt instance. That should be entirely a national charge. The principle is recognised in the Government's Educational Legislation of the present Session, and it should be followed out consistently and completely. Education is a matter of national welfare, and though in logic the whole embraces the parts, yet the analogy does not apply here. What benefits the nation does not necessarily benefit the parish. As a fact, the education given to village boys and girls trains them in such a way

that they can hope to benefit themselves by leaving the parish. It scarcely seems right that the parish should pay for its own denudation.

The third suggestion, that land should only be assessed to the value of its produce, is good up to the point that it would relieve somewhat the unfortunate districts over which the Depression broods most heavily, but it maintains the vicious principle of taxing industry. The principle of the fourth suggestion is better, though this also halts short of perfection, because a farmer's buildings, even his own house, are as essential to the carrying on of his industry as is a mill to the cotton-spinner. With regard to the last suggestion, that, as I have said, has been adopted by the Legislature, though only in the modified form of granting half instead of three-quarter exemption.

There is yet another palliative which calls for notice. We are pretty familiar by this time with the newspaper announcements that So-and-so has granted a rebate of 15 or 25 per cent. to his tenants on their rents. This is not so generous as it looks. As a fact, it is impossible to get the old rents: a farmer would land himself in the Bankruptcy Court if he tried to pay them; the land is unhappily no longer worth such rents. The proper course, then, is for the landlord to reduce them; not to keep them nominally at the old figure and grant quarterly rebatements. For these temporary rebatements are a hardship to the farmer, because the land is assessed in respect of the full nominal rent; so if landlords would reduce the nominal rent, the farmers would get the benefit in reduced assessments, and the landlords would not suffer: they have to give the rebate any way, and if better times came they could always raise the rent at the expiration of a tenancy.

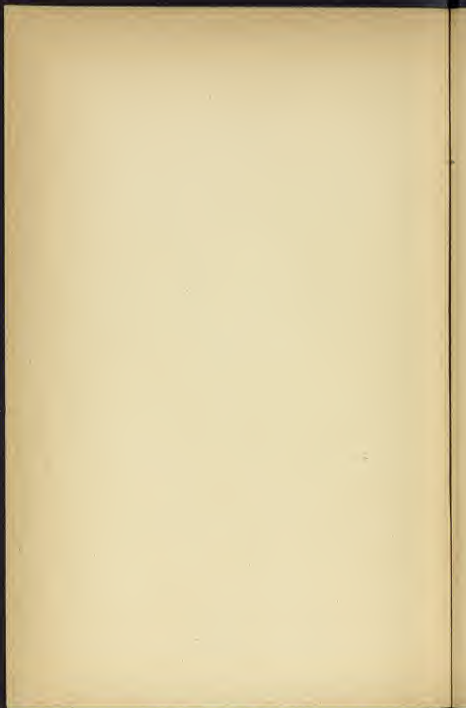
*Protection as a Fiscal Reform.*

But all these reforms imply only a patching up of an essentially vicious system. Rating is wrong at bottom ; and I utterly fail to see how men calling themselves economists can defend such a method of collecting public revenue. Because you pay a certain amount in rent, therefore you are to pay a corresponding amount in rates. Spend your money in other ways than in the purchase or renting of real property, and you will in most cases escape taxation. If, for example, you economize on house-rent by living in a cottage, and hiring a houseboat on the river with the money thus saved, you are called upon to pay less towards the local public revenue than your neighbour who occupies a more spacious dwelling on dry land. The more you pay in rent, the more, says the State, shall you pay in rates. It is hard to see on what principle of justice or common-sense such a system of taxation is based.

But the folly of the thing appears infinitely more outrageous when you consider it in connexion with agriculture, and especially in relation to foreign competition. The foreign cultivator is, as a rule, practically untaxed in his own country ; and when he comes into our ' free ' market to compete with our home producers, he escapes toll again. On the home producer rests the burden of furnishing the public revenue of the country. The foolishness and the lack of common-sense patriotism involved in such a proceeding well-nigh chokes utterance.

Regard what might be instead of what is. The cost of our Army and Navy, of Education, of the Civil Service, might to no small degree be borne by the foreigners who dump their surplus produce on these unfortunate Islands. Denmark, for example, is growing rich out of the profits her farmers make on the butter they sell in England. Why should they not pay a toll in this market for the

privilege of sale? They would not make so much out of us as now, and this might be a source of grief to the Little Englander, who is wildly patriotic over every country except his own; but those Englishmen who venture to think that the prosperity of England is as well worth an Englishman's care as the prosperity of other countries would have considerable reason to rejoice, for England's load of taxation would be so much lightened thereby. And when you lump together all the other countries and their exports to us, you will find that a 10 per cent. duty on those exports would give the Chancellor of the Exchequer a very comfortable sum with which to relieve the British taxpayer. It is useless for the Cobdenite to argue that prices would be raised. Apart from the fact that prices are entirely relative, and that the craze for universal cheapness is proving to be well-nigh the most malignant curse of modern England, there remains the other fact, that in respect of nearly all foreign imports in which there is a healthy home competition the price to the consumer would not appreciably rise, for the foreign producer would have to cut his prices according to his market. In the result one of two things would happen. Either the imports would still come in, in which case they would help to provide our public revenue, thus making the British citizen better off by the remission of so much rates and taxes; or the duty would check importation; and in that case home industry, relieved from deadening competition, would flourish, and employment and wages would rise in corresponding measure. Either alternative may be contemplated without alarm.



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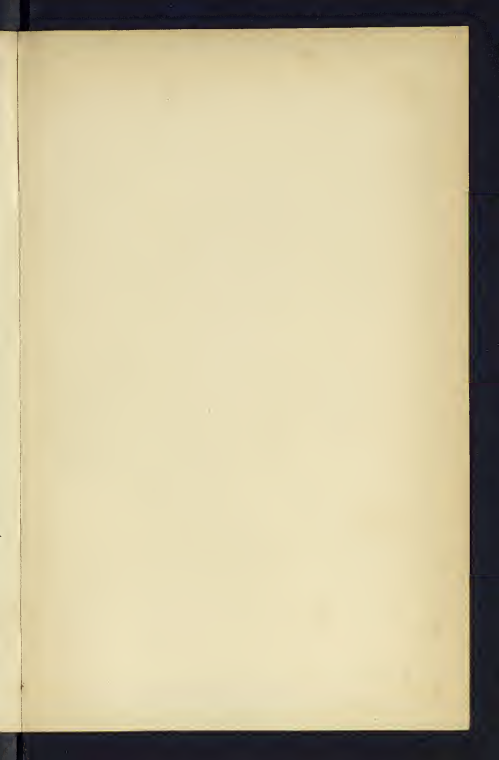
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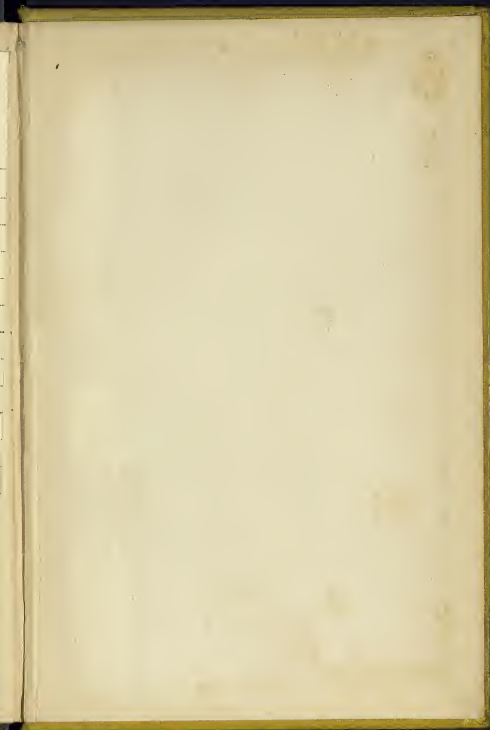




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